

## Documents from School on Afro-American National Question

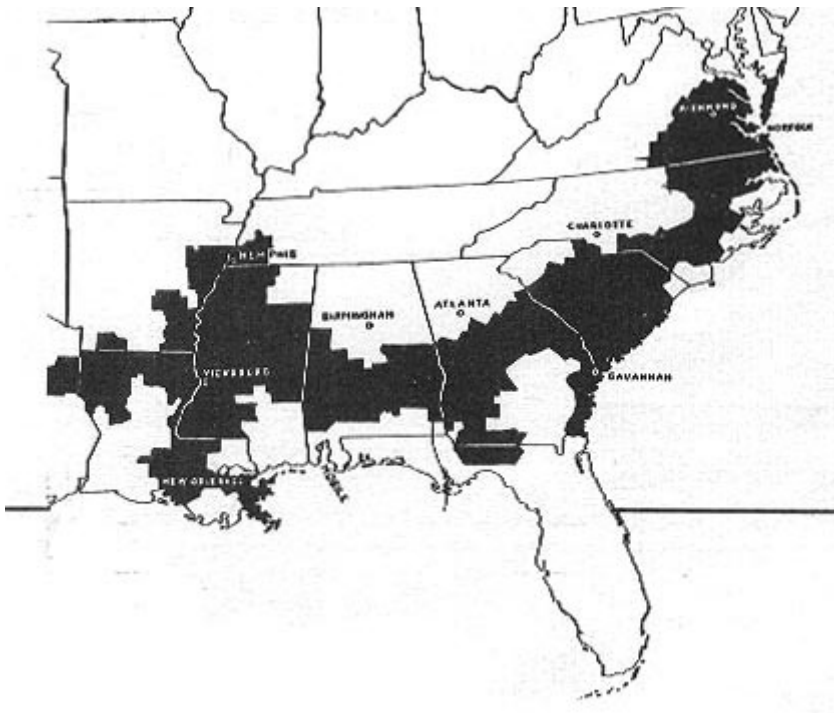
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Sponsored by:

**Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist  
Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective**

Also participating:

**Red Dawn Collective  
and progressive anti-imperialist fighters**



## **In Defense of the Right to Political Secession for the Afro-American Nation**

The articles published in this pamphlet were originally presented at the Marxist-Leninist School on the Afro-American National Question, held in September, 1982, in the Black Belt. Participating in the conference were members of three organizations – the Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective, the Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist, and the Red Dawn Collective – as well as other anti-imperialist fighters. The conference was called in order to reaffirm and clarify the position of the Afro-American people as an oppressed nation and to defend the slogan of the right of self-determination for the Afro-American Nation, i.e., the right to secede from the United States and to establish an independent state.

The recognition of the Afro-American people as an oppressed nation is not a new position – indeed, Lenin, Stalin, the Communist International, and the Communist Party U.S.A., in its revolutionary period, all upheld this view. Revolutionary petty bourgeois Afro-American nationalists have also, throughout the history of the Afro-American liberation struggle, demanded the right to an independent state. However, there has been tremendous resistance to this view, emanating in the first place from the Anglo-American imperialist bourgeoisie which insists that the borders of the United States are immutable, "one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

The chauvinist view of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie has been defended with determination by the revisionists of the CPUSA as well as the other revisionist organizations that have emerged over the last decade. These chauvinists cover their defense of the subjugation of the Afro-American Nation with elaborate arguments on why the Afro-American people are not a nation and therefore have no national rights, and some even theorize away the Afro-American Nation and its struggle under the slogan, "For a United Struggle for Socialism." thus, the fight for socialism itself, in the hands of the revisionists, is used to attack the fight for self-determination of the oppressed nation. The overwhelming chauvinism that has pervaded the "left" in the United States has not helped to unite the U.S. proletariat, as is claimed by the revisionists, but instead has helped to perpetuate national oppression, national conflicts and antagonisms.

The necessity for advancing a thoroughly democratic and Marxist-Leninist line on the Afro-American national question is becoming more pressing with every passing day. The world-wide economic and political crisis of capitalism is creating conditions of grave political instability and growing unrest among the working class and oppressed peoples. The Anglo-American bourgeoisie is mounting an all-sided attack on the working class and the oppressed nations, including the Afro-American Nation, in order to place the burden of this crisis on the backs of others. Thus, we see growing and intensifying political tyranny and suffering inflicted upon the Afro-American Nation, manifested in the revival of the fascist movement, the KKK, the Moral Majority, etc., using the doctrine

of white supremacy as its main tenet. The years ahead promise a great sharpening of both the national and class conflicts in this country. The ruling class is working to incite what it calls "race war" in order to undermine and defeat both the class war of the proletariat and the war of national liberation of the Afro-American people.

There is no question but that only a strong Marxist-Leninist movement, which recognizes and fights for the right of the oppressed nations to secede and form their own national states, can make proletarian unity possible. Only such a movement can guarantee that the struggle of the Afro-American people for liberation and the class struggle of the workers are united and not split apart and derailed.

Recognizing the necessity of reaffirming and further developing the Marxist-Leninist position on the Afro-American national question in preparation for the struggles ahead, the Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective and the Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist organized this school. The groups and individuals that participated all uphold the right of the Afro-American Nation to self-determination and also share unity on a number of other questions of principle. They came together to reach agreement on the critical questions of political line involved in the Afro-American national question, and to establish a program of common action. The conference was characterized by a comradely spirit and frank, vigorous discussion and participation.

It should be noted that there are still differences outstanding on several very important points: (1) the role of mass organizations established along national lines and the attitude of Marxist-Leninists towards this form of organization; (2) the revolutionary capacity of the Anglo-American section of the U.S. proletariat and the effect of the bribery of the labor aristocracy on this section. Despite this, however, the conference was marked by the agreement of the organizations on critical questions of political line and by the enthusiastic agreement on the part of all of the participants to carry out joint work to implant the Marxist-Leninist position on the Afro-American national question. The publication of this pamphlet is the first step in this work.

The first article in this pamphlet reviews the general line of Marxism-Leninism on the national question. It brings to the reader's attention the most important teachings of Lenin and Stalin on the national question, teachings which have been distorted or ignored by the revisionists.

The second article outlines the history, formation and characteristics of the Afro-American Nation. It refutes the baseless arguments and sophistry used by the revisionists to deny the national characteristics and national rights of the Afro-American people.

The third article specifically exposes the history of revisionism on the Afro-American national question. Starting with the roots of this revisionism in the CPUSA, it goes on to criticize the various manifestations of this chauvinist line today, both subtle and blatant, in a number of revisionist organizations.

A fourth article was added to the papers following the school. It reviews bourgeois census statistics which show that the Black Belt remains an area of stable and, in fact, growing Afro-American population.

A final article outlines the views of the Red Dawn Collective on the Afro-American national question, reaffirming its unity with the demand for self-determination.

Resolutions which were adopted by the participants follow the papers.

A paper presented at the school on the history of the Afro-American liberation movement will be published at a future date.

## **Marxism-Leninism and the National-Colonial Question**

### **Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist**

#### **Imperialism and the National Question**

A feature of imperialism is the oppression of nations. The capitalist world is divided into two types of nations – the handful of developed, capitalist oppressor nations, and the great majority of underdeveloped, oppressed nations. This division took place with the colonial conquest of the less developed nations and peoples by the imperialist powers. In the period of colonial rule, nearly all of the nations and peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were reduced to colonial possessions under the rule of the imperialist nations. Others were reduced to semi-colonial status – nominally independent, but still subject to economic, political and military domination by the imperialist powers. Today, as the result of the heroic national liberation wars waged by the colonized peoples, the number of colonies has been reduced to a handful. However, despite the fact that these oppressed nations won nominal political independence, they were still unable to break away from the economic domination of the imperialist powers, which were able to set up a new system of "neo-colonialism."

The imperialists have accumulated the world's capital in their hands and distribute it among the oppressed nations as they choose, keeping the subject nations eternally dependent and in debt. The oppressors develop the economies of the oppressed nations in a distorted way, designed only to benefit the imperialists, in total disregard of the needs of the oppressed nations. The native agricultural and industrial economies are destroyed to make way for the import of goods. The economies of the oppressed nations are oriented around the export of a few commodities, particularly agricultural products and raw materials that are needed by imperialism. Because of the uneven exchange of commodities, the oppressed nations are kept impoverished.

This economic domination works inevitably to undermine political independence. Even in nations where strong national revolutionary movements have taken power, as in Algeria and Angola, independence has been curtailed and they have come under the domination of one or another imperialist power. Only the Peoples' Socialist Republic of

Albania, which broke completely with imperialism and established genuine socialism, has been able to safeguard its independence.

Today, in many countries political independence has been curtailed to the point that the U.S. imperialists or the Soviet social-imperialists directly, though covertly, appoint and place in power the regimes that are to rule. Through military treaties, and overtly illegal invasions, the imperialist powers maintain military domination over the neo-colonial nations. The imperialist powers also impose their language and their imperialist bourgeois culture on the oppressed nations.

Imperialist domination today takes various forms. Some nations, such as Puerto Rico, remain under the rule of classical colonial regimes. Others, such as El Salvador, are ruled by neo-colonial regimes. Still other nations have evolved within the state boundaries of the imperialist states, and are retained within those boundaries by force. In these multinational imperialist states, the oppressed nations are subject to persecution and exploitation by the oppressor nation. Such is the case with the oppressed Afro-American and Chicano Nations and native peoples within the United States.

As the world economy becomes ever more integrated, national economic independence is continually narrowed. Because imperialist exploitation constantly reinforces the inequality of nations, economic power is being concentrated more and more into the hands of the imperialist powers, while the oppressed nations become more and more dependent. As long as the system of capitalist imperialism exists, national inequality and national conflict will continue and intensify.

Lenin and Stalin have pointed out that imperialism inevitably gives rise to 'two tendencies in regard to the development of nations. On the one hand, it internationalizes production and exchange, breaking down national boundaries and uniting the entire capitalist world into one integral entity; on the other hand, it gives rise to great struggles of the oppressed peoples for national liberation aimed at destroying the forms of this unity that have been imposed by imperialist violence. These two tendencies are utterly irreconcilable. Because imperialism can only "unite" nations by force, the imperialists' dreams of "one world" will constantly be shattered by just struggles for national liberation. Because imperialism cannot exist without colonies, the contradiction between the imperialists and the oppressed peoples is among the fundamental contradictions that will drive imperialism to its grave.

### **The Characteristics and Development of Nations**

Nations have not always existed. In primitive society people lived in relatively small communities and groups of communities which were based on kinship and known as tribes. With the development of the system of slavery, tribes were merged and nationalities emerged. Members of these nationalities were no longer related by blood, and in general, nationalities were formed by the merger of tribes with different racial features. These nationalities shared a common language and inhabited a common territory. They also developed a common culture and psychological make-up. However,

under the slave and feudal systems, the landed estates and principalities of the lords were still more or less independent and self-sufficient. Therefore, the various nationalities were still composed of disunited communities which lacked economic and political cohesion. The development of capitalism brought with it the creation of modern nations. Generalized commodity production, economic specialization, and the increase of nationwide trade and communication all led to national economic unity and, consequently, the need for a centralized national state. Lenin wrote:

Modern nations are a product of a definite epoch the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of the abolition of feudalism and the development of capitalism was also the process of formation of people into nations. The British, French, Germans, and Italians formed into nations during the victorious march of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity. [LCW, Vol. 20, p.     ].

Stalin defined a nation in precise, scientific terms as follows: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 307].

The existence of a nation is objective, not subjective. It must have the four basic characteristics which Stalin concisely stated. A nation cannot be wished into being for political purposes or be based on subjective ideas about "national consciousness." Lenin and Stalin opposed the idea that the regionally dispersed Jewish people constituted a nation because they did not possess the four basic characteristics of a nation and therefore, could not act as a nation.

Bauer's point of view, which identifies a nation with its national character, divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an invisible, self-contained force. The result is not a living and active nation, but something mystical, intangible and supernatural. For, I repeat, what sort of nation, for instance, is a Jewish nation which consists of Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian, American and other Jews, the members of which do not understand each other (since they speak different languages), inhabit different parts of the globe, will never see each other, and will never act together, whether in time of peace or in time of war? [*Ibid.*, pp. 312-13].

A nation should not be confused with the categories of race, language or state. Although different nations of people may have distinct racial features, they are, in general, composed of a merger of races. Moreover, it is historical development and not racial characteristics which define a nation. Similarly, although a nation, by definition, must have a common language, language alone does not define a nation. In fact, many distinct nations speak the same language. Finally, states and state boundaries cannot be equated with nations and national territories. Many multinational states exist which include several nations within their boundaries.

Because European imperialism conquered many regions of the world before modern capitalist nations had emerged, nations developed in those regions, or are only now developing, under the conditions of imperialist rule. These oppressed nationalities acquired or are acquiring the characteristics of a nation under the most adverse conditions in which economic and political development is distorted by the needs of imperialism. Such is the case of the oppressed nations and nationalities within the borders of the U.S.: the Afro-Americans, the Chicanos, the native peoples, the Hawaiians, the Micronesians, and the Puerto Ricans.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Joseph Stalin, leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) and architects of the Marxist-Leninist theses on the national question in the age of imperialism



### **The Marxist-Leninist Program on the National Question**

The people of the oppressed nations experience a special yoke of domination known as national oppression. What is the essence of this special yoke?

... national oppression is the system of exploitation and robbery of oppressed peoples, the measures of forcible restriction of the rights of oppressed nationalities, resorted to by imperialist circles. These taken

together represent the policy generally known as a policy of national oppression. [*Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, p. 100].

The great teachers of Marxism-Leninism have pointed out that national oppression takes many diverse forms. It is more severe and cruder in some states than others: in some cases it is confined to the restriction of language and in others, it is manifest in the organization of pogroms and political terror against the oppressed people. What are the classes that support national oppression? The landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy of the oppressor nation all derive material benefit from the oppression of nations. Thus, the policy of national oppression accords only with the material interest of a minority of the population of the oppressor nation.

The aim of the Marxist-Leninist program on the national question is to bring about the international unity of the proletariat in the struggle for socialism. This is the ultimate goal; all our work is carried out in order to achieve this goal. The indispensable condition for achieving this goal is the struggle for the complete equality of all nations. This means eliminating every privilege that the oppressor nation enjoys and every denial of the democratic rights of the oppressed nations. The struggle for equal rights must be reflected in all of the work of the Marxist-Leninist party, in its policies, in its efforts to organize the masses, and in its internal conduct and organization.

Lenin capsulized the Marxist-Leninist program on the national question as follows:

As Democrats we are irreconcilably hostile to any, however slight, oppression of any nationality and to any privileges for any nationalities. As democrats, we demand the right of nations to self-determination **in the political** sense of that term... i.e., the right to secede. We demand unconditional **equality** for all nations in the state and the unconditional protection of the rights of every national minority. We demand broad self-government and autonomy for regions, which must be demarcated, among other terms of reference, in respect of nationality too. [*LCW*, Vol. 19, p. 116].

### **Self-Determination**

The fundamental democratic right of all nations is the right of self-determination. Self-determination means nothing less than the right to establish a sovereign state ruling the territory inhabited by the nation. In the case of the Afro-American Nation, self-determination means the right to secede from the United States. The right of self-determination, as a rule, can only be achieved by the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist rule in the oppressed nation. This requires the removal of imperialist military and police forces, the establishment of a revolutionary democratic or proletarian government representing the people inhabiting the territory of the oppressed nation, and the confiscation of the means of production held by the imperialists and their lackeys. Once these conditions have been accomplished, the people can freely decide by plebiscite the nature of their relations with other nations, including the former oppressor nation.



The right of self-determination is not, according to Stalin, "an **appendage** to the national program, dimly looming in the distant future... it is the **basis** of the national program." [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, p. 229]. Further, Lenin and Stalin always fought against the dilution of this slogan, insisting that it meant nothing other than the right of every nation to secede and establish an independent state. This revolutionary understanding stands in contrast to the nationalist and reformist slogan of "cultural national autonomy." Cultural national autonomy and similar schemes promoted by the national reformists accept the rule of imperialism and limit the aim of the struggle to "autonomous cultural development."

Ultimately, Marxist-Leninists stand for the voluntary association of nations based on equality. But this association must be **voluntary**. Therefore, the right to self-determination is indispensable. Lenin wrote that the whole purpose of the demand for self-determination was not to split nations apart, but to provide the basis for uniting them democratically:

We demand freedom of self-determination, i.e., independence, i.e., freedom of secession for the oppressed nations, not because we have dreamt of splitting up the country economically, or of the ideal of small states, but, on the contrary, because we want large states and the closer unity and even fusion of nations, only on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is **inconceivable** without the freedom to secede. [*LCW*, Vol. 21, pp. 413-14].

Wars of national liberation waged by the oppressed nations are extremely progressive and promote the cause of the eventual amalgamation of nations, strengthening the international unity of the proletariat. They do this by helping to create the conditions both for equality and for voluntary unity. National boundaries between sovereign national states do not present the same kind of barriers to international proletarian unity as does the forced imprisonment of an oppressed nation within a multinational imperialist state. Lenin wrote about the unity of the Norwegian and Swedish workers to illustrate this point:

The close alliance of the Norwegian and Swedish workers, their complete fraternal class solidarity, gained from the Swedish workers recognition of the right of the Norwegians to secede. This convinced the Norwegian workers that the Swedish workers were not infected with Swedish nationalism, and that they placed fraternity with the Norwegian proletarians above the privileges of the Swedish bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The dissolution of the ties imposed upon Norway by the monarchs of Europe and the Swedish aristocracy strengthened the ties between the Norwegian and Swedish workers. [*Ibid.*, Vol. 20, p. 429].

While unconditionally recognizing the right of all nations to self-determination, the revolutionary party of the proletariat reserves the right to agitate for or against a particular national movement based on whether the movement objectively weakens or

strengthens the imperialist enemy and whether it objectively weakens or strengthens international proletarian unity. A Marxist-Leninist party does not stand idly by; it fights for the interests of the proletariat.

When we recognize the right of oppressed peoples to secede, the right to determine their political destiny, we do not thereby settle the question of whether particular nations should secede from the Russian state at a given moment. A people has a right to secede, but it may or may not exercise that right, according to circumstances. Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession, according to the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution. Hence, the question of secession must be determined in each particular case independently, in accordance with existing circumstances, and for this reason the question of the recognition of the right to secession must not be confused with the expediency of secession in any given circumstances. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 3, p. 55].

### **Regional Autonomy**

Along with oppressed nations there also exist oppressed national groupings of people – immigrant communities, small tribal indigenous communities within a given state that do not have all the characteristics of a nation. In this case, the question of a separate national state cannot come up because the conditions do not exist that would make this possible. Nevertheless, these oppressed nationalities must wage a constant struggle to protect themselves from the attacks and oppressive conditions imposed on them by the imperialist state. Here the demand must be raised for local or regional autonomy for the oppressed peoples, which Lenin described as "a general universal principle of a democratic state with a mixed national composition, and a great variety of geographical and other conditions." [LCW, Vol. 20, p. 441 fn.]. This autonomy refers to control over local government (including police forces, educational institutions, etc.), the regulation of trade and the development of natural resources, etc. As Stalin points out there are various degrees of local autonomy:

Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all times; it permits of the most varied forms and degrees of development. It passes from narrow administrative autonomy to a wider, political autonomy... from wide political autonomy to a still wider... form of it; and to... contractual relations. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 367].

Concretely, after the victory of the socialist revolution in the center of Russia in October, 1917, certain regions, because of their varied national composition, were accorded the right to self-rule within the confines of a federated state system. Thus, noted Stalin,

It is therefore necessary that all Soviet organs in the border regions – the courts, the administration, the economic bodies, the organs of direct authority (and organs of the Party as well) – should as far as possible be recruited from the local people.... But establishing schools, courts,

administration and organs of authority functioning in the native language – this is precisely putting Soviet autonomy into practice... [*Ibid.*, pp. 371-2].

We should not confuse autonomy with secession. A nation that secedes forms its own independent state. "Autonomy means not separation, but union between the self-governing highland peoples and the peoples of Russia," [*Ibid.*, p. 415] said Stalin when discussing the concrete problem of Soviet autonomy in the Caucasus. Autonomy is "the right of internal, self-administration, while retaining its fraternal tie with the peoples of Russia." [*Ibid.*, p. 408].

In the U.S., the demand for autonomy applies to the large and numerous immigrant communities from the oppressed nations, and to those Native American peoples whose numbers are too small to form a separate national state. This includes the large Afro-American national minority communities (ghettos) outside of the Black Belt South, the Chicano national minority outside of the Southwest, the Puerto Rican national minority outside of Puerto Rico, etc.

It would be deception to present local autonomy under imperialism as anything but a defensive demand (as are all reforms under capitalism). Nevertheless, persistent struggle for local autonomy can help limit the tyrannical conditions of national oppression. In struggling for local autonomy it is necessary to oppose sham autonomy schemes which keep all real power in the hands of the imperialist state. Typical of these is the reservation system imposed on the Native peoples in which the Native peoples' councils have only token authority while the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is invested with the real power. In this case, demands for genuine autonomy (where applicable) include calling for the destruction of the BIA and the election of real organs of power by the Native peoples.

### **Proletarian Internationalism vs. Bourgeois Nationalism**

The Marxist-Leninist program on the national question is fundamentally different from the nationalism of the bourgeoisie. The Marxist-Leninist program is based exclusively on internationalism – the international unity of the proletariat – which is the antithesis of nationalism. All nationalism, both of the oppressor and the oppressed nations, is the ideology of the bourgeoisie. It is based on the idea of "national unity" – the unity of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of one nation against all other nations. The revolutionary proletariat seeks to divide the masses of working people from "their" bourgeoisie, to free them from the blinders of nationalism, and to bind them together in the **class struggle** with their proletarian brothers and sisters the world over. Lenin wrote:

The interests of the working class and of its struggle against capitalism demand complete solidarity and the closest unity of the workers of all nations; they demand resistance to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie of every nationality. Hence, Social-Democrats [before the split in the Second International, all Marxists called themselves "Social-Democrats"] would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate the right of

nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede, or if they were to support all the national demands of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations. It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is exploited chiefly by the Great-Russian bourgeoisie rather than the non-Russian bourgeoisie, or by the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great-Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges. Capitalism is developing and will continue to develop, anyway, both in integral states with a mixed population and in separate national states.

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its 'own' national bourgeoisie that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right of self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation. [*Ibid.*, p. 424-5].

### **Nationalism of the Oppressor Nation**

Within the communist movement, those contaminated with the chauvinism of the oppressor nation are fond of the Marxist-Leninist teachings about the voluntary unity of nations, but completely fail to understand the critical meaning of the word **voluntary**. They tend to be blind to the violent nature of the "unity" imposed by imperialism and see no need to disturb this coercive union. They like to champion equal rights, but can't seem to support the demand for the right to political secession because they feel that this would "divide" the working class. They fail to see that as long as self-determination is suppressed, genuine unity between the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations will be undermined. Lenin wrote:

The proletariat of the oppressor nation must not confine themselves to general, stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favor of the equality of nations in general, such as a pacifist bourgeois will repeat. The proletariat cannot remain silent on the question of the **frontiers** of a state founded on national oppression, a question so 'unpleasant' for the imperialist bourgeoisie. The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies

and nations oppressed by 'their own' nation. Otherwise the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words; neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations; the hypocrisy of the reformists and Kautskyites, who defend self-determination but remain silent about the nations oppressed by 'their own' nation and kept in 'their own' state by force, would remain unexposed. [LCW, Vol. 22, p. 147].

Those influenced by the chauvinism of the oppressor nation tend to see the national boundaries of the multinational imperialist states as eternal and immutable. They reject the idea of the political secession of an oppressed nation as "impossible." This argument is absurd. First of all, the **right** of political secession must be universally recognized and fought for by Marxist-Leninists in the interest of building proletarian unity, regardless of the viability of this demand at a particular time and place. Second, what may appear to be impossible today, may become quite possible in the future. Weakened by imperialist war, national liberation wars around the world, and class war at home, U.S. imperialism may very well be forced to concede the right of self-determination to Puerto Rico, the Afro-American Nation, and the Chicano Nation. By preaching defeatism beforehand, the chauvinist elements in the communist movement serve only the interests of U.S. imperialism.

The same comrades who question the "viability" of a movement for the right to political secession also complain that Marxist-Leninists should not raise the idea of the right to political secession in the absence of a powerful popular movement already raising this demand. This argument is equally absurd. Is it possible that Marxist-Leninists support democracy and equality, but only **after** the people have risen to demand them? If so, we would not be the consistent **leaders** of the struggle for democracy, but rather worthless hypocrites and tailists. Stalin defended the absolute necessity of the right to self-determination of the oppressed nations in monarchist Yugoslavia even though there were no secessionist movements in Yugoslavia at that time:

Proceeding from the fact that there is no serious popular movement for independence among the Croats and the Slovenes at the present moment, Semich arrives at the conclusion that the question of the right of nations to secede is an academic question, that, at any rate, it is not an urgent one. This is wrong, of course. Even if we admit that this question is not urgent at the present moment, it might definitely become very urgent **if war begins**, or when war begins, **if a revolution should break out in Europe**, or when it breaks out.

In 1912, when we Russian Marxists were outlining the first draft of the national programme no serious movement for independence yet existed in any of the border regions of the Russian empire. Nevertheless, we deemed it necessary to include in our programme the point on the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of every nationality to secede and exist as an independent state. Why? Because we based ourselves not only on

what existed then but also on what was developing and impending in the general system of international relations, that is, we took into account not only the present, but also the-future. We knew that if any nationality were to demand separation, the Russian Marxists would fight to ensure the right to secede for every such nationality. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 72-73].

Lenin, addressing the same question in 1914, wrote:

Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle 'guesses,' we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state....

In the leaps which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions, clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable. We proletarians declare in advance that we are **opposed** to Great Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation.

In her quest for 'practicality' Rosa Luxembourg has lost sight of the **principal** practical task both of the Great Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of other nationalities: that of day by day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. [LCW, Vol. 20, pp. 414-15].

### **Nationalism of the Oppressed Nation**

On the other hand, those comrades contaminated with the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation are fond of the Marxist-Leninist teachings about self-determination, but completely fail to understand the ultimate goal of this struggle – the voluntary unity of nations. They tend to see only as far as the oppressed national bourgeoisie does – to the liberation of their nation – missing the underlying goal of international proletarian unity and socialism. Both of these deviations are reflections of the influence of the bourgeoisie on the Marxist-Leninist movement and undermine internationalist unity. Great nation chauvinism is by far the more dangerous of these deviations because it is supported by the bourgeoisie in power and because of the usual predominance of workers of the oppressor nation. Bourgeois nationalism within the oppressed nation, however, is also dangerous as it has the potential to derail the national revolutionary movements and harm the unity of the working class as a whole.

...the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organizational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries

in the face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie. [*Ibid.*, pp. 411-12].

The Marxist-Leninist program on the national question is restricted to the negative demand of **opposing all national privileges**. It does not, and cannot, support every demand of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations. In Lenin's words:

Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, and in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, **in favor**, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for **its own** bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privilege on the part of the oppressed nation. [*Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 149].

Stalin makes a clear distinction between the **rights of nations**, on the one hand, which Marxist-Leninists are obliged to fight for, and all the particular demands which are raised by the various classes within an oppressed nation, on the other hand, which Marxist-Leninists are in no way obligated to identify themselves with or fight for.

Social-Democracy in all countries... proclaims the right of nations to self-determination... Nations are sovereign, and all nations have equal rights... This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things; but this does not mean that Social-Democracy will subscribe to such a decision if taken by some institution of a particular nation. The obligations of Social-Democracy, which defends the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, which consists of various classes, are two different things. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 321-22].

Stalin went on to give an example of Marxist-Leninist policy in terms of religion, referring to the privileges given the Orthodox Church in Russia:

Social-Democrats will always protest against persecution of Catholicism or Protestantism; they will always defend the right of nations to profess any religion they please; but at the same time, on the basis of a correct understanding of the interests of the proletariat, they will carry on agitation against Catholicism, Protestantism and the religion of the Orthodox Church in order to achieve the triumph of the socialist world outlook. [*Ibid.*, pp. 368-69].

Lenin argued against those who promoted the slogan of "national culture" because they failed to make any distinction between the progressive and reactionary aspects of a bourgeois nation's culture, between the proletarian and capitalist contributions. Since the dominant culture of the bourgeois nation is, in fact, the culture of the bourgeoisie with its

reactionary features, those who laud this culture and who attack the international culture of the proletariat are bourgeois chauvinists. "The place of those who advocate the slogan of national culture," wrote Lenin, "is among the nationalist petty bourgeoisie, not among the Marxists." [LCW, Vol. 20, p. 25] He explained,

While protecting the equality of all nationalities against the serf owners and the police state we do not support '**national culture**' but **international** culture, which includes only part of each national culture – only the consistently democratic and socialist content of each national culture. [*Ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 116].

The aim of the revolutionary proletariat is not to promote all of the demands or customs of a particular nation but simply to **remove inequality**.

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination the aim of Social-Democracy is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of strife between nations, to take the edge off that strife and reduce it to a minimum. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 322].

The purpose of this is to shift the warfare from the **national** theatre to the **class** theatre. Watching carefully the actions of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, Lenin wrote,

...the proletariat's policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace (which the bourgeoisie cannot bring about completely and which can be achieved only with **complete** democracy), in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle. [LCW, Vol. 20, pp. 409-10].

He continued, and this is the main point,

The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. [*Ibid.*].

### **The Struggle Against Chauvinism**

To develop internationalist unity Marxist-Leninists must stress the right of political secession of the oppressed nations within the ranks of the workers of the oppressor nation, while stressing the need to build the unity of workers of all nations among the ranks of the workers of the oppressed nation. The struggle against national chauvinism, both of the oppressed and oppressor nations, must be waged in the first place by the proletarians of that nation. Stalin pointed this out.



When it is said that the fight against Great Russian chauvinism must be made the corner-stone of the national question, the intention is to indicate the duties of the Russian communist; it implies that it is the duty of the Russian communist himself to combat Russian chauvinism. If the struggle against Russian chauvinism were undertaken not by the Russian but by the Turkestanian or Georgian communists, it would be interpreted as anti-Russian chauvinism. That would confuse the whole issue and strengthen Great Russian chauvinism. Only the Russian communists can undertake the fight against Great Russian chauvinism and carry it through to the end. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 272-73].

On the other hand, Stalin pointed out:

(The) duty of the non-Russian communists to combat their own chauvinists. Russian communists cannot combat Tatar, Georgian or Baskir chauvinism; if a Russian communist were to undertake the difficult task of combatting Tatar or Georgian chauvinism it would be regarded as a fight waged by a Great Russian chauvinist against the Tatars or the Georgians.

The intention is to point to the duty of the local communists, the duty of the non-Russian communists to combat their own chauvinists. Only the Tatar, Georgian and other communists can fight Tatar, Georgian and other chauvinism. [*Ibid.*].

### **Internationalist Organization**

Communists always promote the organization of the working class along international lines, and oppose the organization of workers along national lines. Organizing workers into separate organizations based on nationality promotes nationalism, isolation and distrust. Organizing workers of all nationalities into one class-wide organization promotes class consciousness, and breaks down national distrust and isolation. Stalin spoke to this issue unequivocally in his work, *Marxism and the National Question*.

We know where demarcation of workers according to nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the splitting of trade unions according to nationalities, aggravation of national friction, national strike breaking, complete demoralization within the ranks of Social-Democracy – such are the results of organizational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of Social-Democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia....

The only cure for this is organization on the basis of internationalism....

This kind of organization influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impression on the whole mental life of the worker. The worker lives the life of his organization, which stimulates his intellectual growth

and educates him. And thus, acting within his organization and continually meeting there comrades from other nationalities, and side by side with them waging a common struggle under the leadership of a common collective body, he becomes deeply imbued with the idea that the workers are **primarily** members of one class family, members of the united army of socialism....

Therefore, the international type of organization serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.

But this is not the case with an organization on the basis of nationalities. When the workers are organized according to nationality they isolate themselves within their national shells, fenced off from each other by organizational barriers. The stress is laid not on what is **common** to the workers but on what distinguishes them from each other. In this type of organization the worker is **primarily** a member of his nation: a Jew, a Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that **national** federalism in organization inculcates in the workers a spirit of national seclusion.

Therefore, the national type of organization is a school of national narrow-mindedness and stagnation. [*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 377-79].

In a multinational state, a multinational proletarian party representing and composed of workers of all nationalities in the country must be built. "We are fighting on the ground of a definite state," wrote Lenin, "we unite the workers of all nations living in this state; we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal along **all** possible paths." [*LCW*, Vol. 20, p. 413] Of course, within the territories of the various nations making up the multinational state the national composition of the party organization will differ, as will the emphasis of the party's work. "It goes without saying," Stalin wrote, "that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes, wide autonomy for the **regions** within the single integral party." [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 378] A common internationalist line must guide the work of the entire party so that it does not fall prey to the pitfalls of nationalism.

The policy of internationalist organization applies not only to the party organization but to **all** working class organizations. Of course, exceptional conditions may call for Marxist-Leninists to work with or within mass organizations organized along national lines, but even then Marxist-Leninists will fight for the transition to an international organization and against national exclusiveness. Arguing against the proposals of the Jewish Bund to build both mass and party organizations along national lines (under the slogan of "cultural national autonomy"), Lenin wrote:

Unity from below, the complete unity and consolidation in each locality of Social-Democratic workers of all nationalities **in all working class organizations** – that is our slogan. Down with the deceptive bourgeois,

compromise slogan of 'cultural national autonomy'!" [LCW, Vol. 19, p. 118, emphasis added].

Thus, in the case of the U.S. today, we as Marxist-Leninists must bring together the workers of various nationalities (Afro-Americans, Anglo-Americans, Chicano, Native Americans, etc.) in international organizations to insure the unity of the proletariat in its fight for power. We must warn those developing Marxist-Leninists who are still contaminated by bourgeois nationalism that "the formation of communist organizations on national lines is a contradiction of the principle of proletarian internationalism." [Comintern, *Theses on the Eastern Question*, 1922, p. 57] Lenin time and again warned the would-be Marxists of the oppressor and oppressed nations against the dangers of national organizations of workers, dangerous not only to the cause of proletarian revolution, but also to the struggle against national oppression.

If an Ukrainian Marxist allows himself to be swayed by his quite legitimate and natural hatred of the Great Russian oppressors to such a degree that he transfers even a particle of this hatred, even if it be only **estrangement**, to the proletarian culture and proletarian cause of the Great Russian workers, then such a Marxist will get bogged down in bourgeois nationalism. Similarly, the Great Russian Marxist will be bogged down, not only in bourgeois, but also in Black Hundred nationalism, if he loses sight, even for a moment, of the demand for complete equality for the Ukrainians, or of their **right** to form an independent state.

The Great Russian and Ukrainian workers must work together, and as long as they live in a single state, act in **closest organizational unity**... All advocacy of the segregation of the workers of one nation from those of another, all attacks upon Marxist 'assimilation'... is bourgeois nationalism against which it is essential to **wage a ruthless struggle**. [LCW, Vol. 20, p. 33].

### **The National Revolutionary Movements**

The national revolutionary movements of the oppressed nations are a component part of the world socialist revolution. This is true, first of all, because both the national liberation movements and the proletarian socialist movement have the same enemy – imperialism. Beyond this, the unity of the two revolutionary struggles is guaranteed because only socialism can secure complete national liberation. Stalin wrote in 1921,

The imperialist war has shown, and the revolutionary experience of recent years has again confirmed that:

- 1) The national and colonial questions are inseparable from the question of emancipation from the rule of capital;

2) Imperialism, (the highest form of capitalism) cannot exist without the political and economic enslavement of unequal nations and colonies;

3) The unequal nations and colonies cannot be liberated without the overthrow of the rule of capital;

4) The victory of the proletariat cannot be lasting without the liberation of the nations and colonies from the yoke of imperialism. [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 5, p. 57]

The truth of this statement has been reinforced over the last 60 years. The more that imperialism consolidates its viselike economic grip on the most isolated corners of the world, and the more that capitalism develops in the oppressed nations, the more closely connected the national liberation movements become with the struggle for socialism.

Nevertheless, the national democratic revolution represents a distinct stage in the revolutionary process that eventually leads to socialism. In most of the oppressed nations, the aims of this stage are: the elimination of the rule of the feudal oligarchy and its remnants; the carrying out of the agrarian revolution; the overthrow of the rule of the imperialists and their comprador bourgeois lackeys; the confiscation of their property; and the establishment of a revolutionary democratic government. These goals are all bourgeois-democratic in nature – they do not touch the capitalist relations of production. However, under the conditions of imperialism, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations cannot completely achieve these goals or defend them.

Independent national capitalist development is impossible under imperialism. Only the elimination of capitalist relations of production and their replacement by socialist relations of production can enable a nation to carry out a complete rupture with imperialist domination. The national bourgeoisie is, of course, the mortal enemy of socialism, because it means the elimination of the national bourgeoisie as a class. Hence the tendency of the national bourgeoisie to compromise with imperialism and to join with it against the national revolutionary movement led by the proletariat. The Fourth Congress of the Comintern described this shift in class alliances in the national liberation movement as follows:

The objective tasks of colonial revolutions exceed the limit of bourgeois democracy by the very fact that a decisive victory is incompatible with the domination of world imperialism. While the native bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia are the pioneers of colonial revolutionary movements, with the entry of proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses into these movements, however, the rich bourgeoisie and bourgeois landlords begin to leave it as the social interests of the masses assume prominence. [**Comintern**, *Theses on the Eastern Question*, op. cit. p. 52]

The native bourgeoisie is generally divided into two sections. The comprador bourgeoisie is a merchant class which is connected to the import and export of commodities. Its class interests are tied to imperialist rule, and it serves as imperialism's political lackey. The industrial bourgeoisie, on the other hand, finds itself in competition with the imperialist monopolies for the national market and must resist the imperialists' efforts to eliminate native industry. Therefore, in the early stages of the national democratic revolution, this sector of the bourgeoisie can play a progressive, and even a revolutionary, role. However, as capitalism and imperialism develop, the independence of this class is curtailed and it is forced to compromise with imperialism. In the end it sides with imperialism and will fight to the death to see that the revolution is stopped halfway. Therefore, the native bourgeoisie is generally the proponent of national reformism, protesting the worst abuses of imperialism but opposing revolutionary change.

The petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations vacillates between the reformism of the national bourgeoisie and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Generally, in the end it breaks into two sections – the better off siding with the bourgeoisie and the poorer siding with the proletariat. The revolutionary sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the poor peasantry and the urban poor, can make staunch allies of the proletariat in both the national democratic and the socialist revolutions. They are strategic allies of the proletariat because they too benefit from the establishment of socialism. But the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie can never lead the national democratic revolution to complete victory because they, in and of themselves, cannot break with capitalism, and therefore, imperialism.

Only the proletariat of the colony or oppressed nation can carry the anti-imperialist revolution through to the end, because it stands for a complete break with capitalism and imperialism and for the establishment of socialism. Of course, this does not mean that the proletariat will always lead the national revolutionary struggle. In the early stages, the national revolutionary petty bourgeoisie may be in control. But the proletariat will always seek to become the leader from the very outset. The more quickly the proletariat is able to gain this leadership, the sooner final victory will come, and the fewer painful zigzags and counter-revolutions the nation will have to endure.

The ability of the proletariat to gain hegemony over the movement is objectively facilitated by the development of capitalism in the nation. This strengthens the proletariat as a class, brings the class distinctions between the national bourgeois reformist program and the proletarian revolutionary program into sharper relief, and facilitates the socialist transformation following the revolution. But even in an economically backwards nation, the proletariat can gain leadership of the movement, as the experience of the Albanian revolution illustrates.

The Party [PLA] became the leadership owing to its correct Marxist-Leninist political line and its ability to implement this line, basing itself on the Marxist-Leninist theory, the objective conditions, the revolutionary situation, and its own revolutionary experience and that of the masses of people. [*The National*

*Conference of Studies on the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War of the Albanian People, Tirana, 1975, p. 27]*

The Afro-American proletariat, which has known only suffering and abuse at the hands of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie, is the most revolutionary section of the national movement.



The proletariat will, and must, support a national revolutionary movement led by the national bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie if it is truly revolutionary, that is, if it aims to overthrow imperialism and reaction and supports revolutionary democracy, including the independent political activity of the proletariat. However, in supporting such a movement, the proletariat must always be free to criticize the tendencies to compromise with imperialism and reaction on the part of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois leadership. This is carried out with the knowledge that the bourgeois leadership will eventually vacillate. The proletariat must constantly be building its position so that it can, as soon as possible, take the leadership of the revolutionary movement into its own hands.

At all times, the proletariat gives great attention to exposing the national reformists who are the enemy of the revolution. The proletarian party must never form a bloc with the national reformists because this would compromise the whole struggle to build an independent national revolutionary movement. It must, however, engage in certain joint actions with the national reformists in order to win the masses away from their leadership. Revolutionaries must never isolate themselves from the mass activities of the national reformists based on sectarian ideas about "maintaining purity." The Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 spelled out the nature and conditions of joint action with the national reformist movements:

It is necessary to reject the formation of any kind of bloc between the communist party and the national reformist opposition; this does not

exclude the formation of temporary agreements and the coordinating of separate activities in connection with definite anti-imperialist demonstrations, provided that these demonstrations of the bourgeois opposition can be utilized for the development of the mass movement, and provided that these agreements do not in any way limit the freedom of the communist parties in the matter of agitation among the masses and among the organizations of the latter. Of course, in this work the communists must know how at the same time to carry on the most relentless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois nationalism and against the slightest signs of its influence inside the labor movement.

[**Comintern**, *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies*, op. cit., p. 93]

Marxist-Leninists work to bring about a split between the petty bourgeois national revolutionaries and the national reformists and to win the former to the program and leadership of the proletariat. Their goal is to build a national liberation front composed of all revolutionary patriots of the oppressed nation, and led by the proletarian party. Within this front the proletarian party must play the leading role and preserve its independence. While building a united front with the revolutionary nationalists, Marxist-Leninists must be careful to draw a sharp line of demarcation between the ideologies of Marxism-Leninism and nationalism, including the nationalism of those who pose as communists. The Second Congress of the Comintern stated quite clearly:

A resolute struggle must be waged against the attempt to clothe the revolutionary liberation movements in the backward countries which are not genuinely communist in communist colours. The Communist International has the duty of supporting the revolutionary movements in the colonies and backwards countries only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties – which will be truly communist and not only in name – in all the backwards countries and educating them to a consciousness of their special task, namely that of fighting against the bourgeois democratic trend in their own nation. The Communist International should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries, and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage. [**Comintern**, *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions*, op. cit., p. 39]

There must be no blurring over of the distinction between revolutionary nationalism and Marxism-Leninism because ultimately it will be the distinction between capitalism and socialism, between counterrevolution and revolution. As the anti-imperialist revolution develops to higher stages, those that oppose this forward action become the champions of revisionism and counterrevolution. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern described the character of the petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalist movements, based on the summation of its experience with these movements in many countries:

In India, Egypt and Indonesia, there was again founded a radical wing from among the different petty bourgeois groups... which stands for a more or less consistently national revolutionary point of view. But the fact must not be lost sight of that these parties, essentially considered, are connected with the national bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie intelligentsia at the head of these parties puts forward national revolutionary demands, but at the same time appears more or less consciously as the representative of the **capitalist development** of their country. Some of these elements can become the followers of various kinds of reactionary utopias, but when confronted with feudalism and imperialism they, in distinction from the parties of the big national bourgeoisie, appear at the outset not as reformists but as more or less revolutionary representatives of the anti-imperialist interests of the colonial bourgeoisie. This is the case, at least, so long as the development of the revolutionary process in the country does not put on the order of the day in a definite and sharp form the fundamental international questions of the bourgeois revolution, particularly the questions of the agrarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry... As soon as the revolution has placed the class interests of the proletariat and peasantry in critical contradiction not only to the rule of the feudal-imperialist bloc, but also to the class rule of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeois groups usually go back to the position of the national-reformist parties. [**Comintern**, *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement*, loc. cit. pp. 93-94]

Marxist-Leninists then, while allying with the genuine revolutionary nationalists, must expose their vacillation, winning the most steadfast of the revolutionary nationalists to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and winning the masses of people to the leadership of the party.

### **The National Question Under Socialism**

When the proletariat comes to power in the U.S. it will immediately grant the right of political secession to all nations that were under the rule of the U.S. imperialists. Should the party of the proletariat deem a particular secessionist movement contrary to the interests of its class rule it would voice its opposition. However, it would only use persuasion, never the force of arms, to dissuade a nation from the path of secession. It would respect the will of the people as expressed in a free and democratic plebiscite. (This is entirely different from the way in which the proletariat would treat attempts by the deposed U.S. imperialists to foment counterrevolution under a nationalist banner.) Given the diversity of the nations within the U.S., the brutal history of oppression, and the legitimate distrust felt by the people of the oppressed nations, some nations may very well choose independence following liberation. If this is the nation's will, then independence will be the only sure path to eventual voluntary unity. And is there really any harm in creating new national states based on socialism? Lenin wrote:



There is every sign that imperialism will leave its successor, socialism, a heritage of **less** democratic frontiers, a number of annexations in Europe and in other parts of the world. Is it to be supposed that victorious socialism, restoring and implementing full democracy all along the line, will refrain from **democratically** demarcating state frontiers and ignore the 'sympathies' of the population? [LCW, Vol. 22, p. 324].

Of course, ultimately, the goal of socialism is to unite all nations, but the path to this, which will certainly be long and tortuous, does not necessarily proceed simply and mechanically from the state boundaries that imperialism created which, as Lenin said, are less than democratic. The complete liberation of all oppressed nations, wrote Lenin, is the only path to eventual unity.

In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede. [*Ibid.*, p. 147].

In the case of those nations that choose to remain within the multinational proletarian state, and in the case of the many distinct nationalities in the U.S., broad regional and local autonomy will be established. As stated before, regional autonomy means control over local government, police forces, educational institutions, the regulation of trade and the development of natural resources, etc.

Marxist-Leninists realize that national inequality will not disappear with the victory of the socialist revolution and, moreover, that socialist construction and the struggle to abolish social classes will not, in and of itself, abolish national inequality. National oppression is distinct from class oppression and its abolition requires a protracted struggle aimed specifically at eliminating all remnants of national oppression and inequality. Lenin wrote,

A foundation – socialist production – is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but on this foundation the democratic organization of the state, and the democratic army, etc., are also essential. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the **possibility**, the possibility becomes **reality** 'only' – 'only!' with the establishment of democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the 'sympathies' of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And on this basis, in turn, there will develop practical elimination of even the slightest national friction, or the slightest national mistrust, accompanied by an accelerated rapprochement and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state **withers away**. [*Ibid.*, p. 325].

The struggle to do away with national oppression requires that all legal and political privileges enjoyed by the oppressor nation be eliminated. The political districts and state lines drawn up by the imperialists will be redrawn to reflect the real national, social and physical features of the various regions, bearing in mind first of all the political rights of the formerly oppressed nations and nationalities. English will no longer be imposed as a compulsory official language; all languages will be treated equally. The affairs of the government and the courts, as well as education, will be conducted in all of the languages in use in each locality. All remnants of state religion and privileges for the Protestant faith will be eliminated.

A determined mass campaign will be waged to do away with the putrid ideology of white supremacy, backed by the full support of the government, the schools and the mass media. All discrimination based on nationality and all efforts to promote white supremacy will be punished with stiff prison terms.

Unlike imperialism, socialism will not curb the development of nations, but will encourage it. Freed from imperialism, and under the leadership of the proletariat, the oppressed nations will be able to realize a rapid, all-around political, economic and cultural development. There will be a flourishing of national culture, and the further development of national languages so long suppressed by imperialism. Of course, the proletariat will now be in charge of this cultural development and will bring out the progressive and spiritually uplifting aspects of the cultural traditions, discarding the reactionary bourgeois and feudal prejudices. Cultural development will be national in form and socialist in content.

The formerly oppressed nations will, for the first time, be able to exercise their political rights, and organize administrative organs and elect political representatives.

The national economies, so long restricted and distorted by the needs of imperialism, will be able to develop according to the needs of the nation. Recognizing that as long as economic, political and cultural underdevelopment remains, nations will remain objectively unequal despite juridical equality, the central proletarian state will provide special assistance to the formerly oppressed nations to assure this development. Stalin wrote the following in regard to the situation in the Soviet Union:

...the Party considered it necessary to help the regenerated nations of our country to rise to their feet and attain their full stature, to revive and develop their national cultures, widely to develop schools, theatres and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages, to nationalize – that is to staff with members of the given nation – the Party, trade-union, cooperative, state and economic apparatuses, to train their own, national, Party and Soviet cadres, and to curb all elements – who are, indeed, few in number – that try to hinder this policy of the Party." [Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 11, p. 369].

The distinctions among all nations will eventually disappear, but this will not come about through the subjugation of one nation by another, but by the flourishing of all nations and the growth of economic, political, cultural and social interaction on the basis of equality. Stalin explained this process in the following words:

It would be incorrect to think that after the defeat of world imperialism national differences will be abolished and national languages will die away immediately, at one stroke, by decree from above, so to speak, Nothing is more erroneous than this view, To attempt to bring about the merging of nations by decree from above, by compulsion, would be playing into the hands of the imperialists, it would spell disaster to the cause of the liberation of nations and be fatal to the cause of organizing cooperation and fraternity among nations, Such a policy would be tantamount to a policy of assimilation.

You know, of course, that the policy of assimilation is absolutely excluded from the arsenal of Marxism-Leninism, as being an anti-popular and counter-revolutionary policy, a fatal policy.

The first step [*of* the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat], during which national oppression will be completely abolished, will be a stage marked by the growth and flourishing of the formerly oppressed nations and national languages, the consolidation of equality among nations, the elimination of mutual national distrust, and the establishment and strengthening of international ties among nations.

Only in the second stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat, to the extent that a single world socialist economy is built up in place of the world capitalist economy – only in that stage will something in the nature of a common language begin to take shape; for only in that stage will the nations feel the need to have, in addition to their own national languages, a common international language – for convenience of intercourse and of economic, cultural and political cooperation,

In the next stage of the period of world dictatorship of the proletariat – when the world socialist system of economy becomes sufficiently consolidated and socialism becomes part and parcel of the life of the peoples, and when practice convinces the nations of the advantages of a common language over national languages – national differences and languages will begin to die away and make room for a world language, common to all nations. [*Ibid.*, pp. 362-364].

### **Khrushchevite Revisionism and the Re-Oppression of Nations**

The people of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, were able to establish genuine socialism and build truly equal and free relations between nations in a

multinational socialist state. But with the restoration of capitalism in the USSR after the death of Stalin, all the social conflicts of capitalism, including national oppression, reappeared. The Khrushchevite revisionists are attempting to prove that today in the USSR, the relations among nations and nationalities have reached a new stage, the stage of "a new historic community of men – one single Soviet people." But the "new Soviet man" is a fabrication. The policy of Russification is forcing the national minorities and nations to adopt the Russian language and culture. And the continued existence of oppressed nationalities in the USSR, who resist the imposition of Great Russian culture, is manifested in the national uprisings reported in many of the outlying areas, such as Georgia.

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Genuine Marxist-Leninists today reject revisionism when they take up the question of national liberation. Thus, in the U.S., we Marxist-Leninists rely on the line and teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin when handling the national question because their works are based on the scientific outlook of the proletariat.

To sum up, comrades, the Marxist-Leninist program on the Afro-American national question is embodied in the following slogans:

**Equality of all nations, and no privileges for any nation.**

**For the right to political secession for the Afro-American Nation.**

**Expropriation of the white landlords in the Black Belt.**

**State unity of the Black Belt.**

**Self-rule for Afro-Americans in the Black Belt and a plebiscite on secession.**

**Regional autonomy for areas of distinct nationality within the state.**

**No state religion.**

**No state language; for the use of the language of the local population in state and economic affairs. International organization of workers (Party, trade unions, clubs, schools, and sports).**

**Oppose nationalism of oppressor and oppressed nations.**

**For communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat to bring about the complete elimination of national oppression and freedom of the Afro-American Nation.**

**For the leadership of the working class in the Afro-American national liberation movement.**

## **The Development of the Afro-American Nation**

**Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective**

The Afro-American national question has its origins in the period of U.S. history during which the slave/plantation economy prevailed in the Southern states. The slave trade which made this economic system possible provided the foundation for capitalist accumulation in England. This trade, along with cotton, supported the growth of mercantile capitalism and the so-called industrial revolution in England. In New England as well, the sale of slaves and liquor provided capital that would later be transferred into more respectable business enterprises such as banking and textiles.

The thousands of Africans who were kidnapped and sold into bondage, along with their millions of descendants, underwent a somewhat unique but explainable historical process. Separated from their families and homeland, robbed of their freedom and cultures, their control of their labor power denied them, the African people began the transition from Africans to Africans in America, or Afro-Americans.

From the moment the Africans were captured and placed in slave ships, but especially when they arrived on plantations, the unplanned but objective process of national formation began. The first acts in this direction forbade the Africans to use their own language. They spoke the various languages of West and Central Africa – Mande, Fulani, Ashanti, Yoruba and many others, as well as Arabic. Some understood the language of the neighboring people or tribes, others understood the lingua franca or language of trade of their region. Therefore, it was essential for the slave trader first and then the slave owner to prevent discussion from being carried on in languages they did not understand. Conspiratorial conversation about escape and attack had to be stopped. For the same reason, members of families and tribes were separated as much as possible beyond the natural sale process.

Consequently, all communication was conducted in the language of the new oppressor. There was no formal training, and the process was at first difficult for adults. Children, of course, learned the language in the way any child learns a language. The English that the slaves came to speak was colored by the grammar and syntax of their own languages. This is true because the Africans continued to think in their own languages, many for the rest of their lives, and they spoke the languages in secret, sometimes passing them on to their children.

Today, the Afro-American people speak and write the English of the Anglo-American population. This has developed through common experience with non-Afro-Americans and formal education. On the other hand, common experience and historical interaction

has created a form of "Black English" widely understood by Afro-American people across the country with regional variations. Some progressive and farsighted educators have recognized this and adopted an approach that teaches American English from the framework of "Black English."

The shocking and terrifying experience of being kidnapped, the "middle passage" across the ocean and the demeaning auction block served as initial factors that created a similar psychological make-up. As life on the plantation evolved, the slaves developed a common outlook about their conditions of oppression.

Prior to this form of slavery in the U.S., Black and white indentured servants shared the same perspective and ideological framework, that is, in opposition to the masters and planters. With the shift to African slavery, this was changed. The slave began to develop a consciousness that was opposed to the white slaveowners and any other whites who were associated with or supportive of the system. At the same time, a sense of national consciousness was developing among whites and this excluded the slave as inferior and gave the whites a privileged status because they were free. This was promoted by the planter ruling class and their preachers and teachers. The idea was to keep Blacks and whites apart, thereby preventing common struggle. The vehicle was white supremacy. Thus, two different forms of national consciousness were being shaped at the same time. This is important to note as far as understanding that as the American nation developed and at the founding of the U.S., Blacks were not a part of it in more than the legal or constitutional ways.

Life on the plantation gave rise to the beginnings of an Afro-American culture. This was seen in the music (spirituals), child rearing (protection and preparation) and other social practices. Today, this culture is manifested in a rich literature, primarily dealing with the Afro-American experience although not limited to it. The music of Blues, Jazz and R & B are the artistic expressions of the Afro-American people in this country during their various stages of oppression.

Strictly speaking, Afro-American people in their majority have always occupied the same area of the country. Although isolated from other slaves with the exception of those on the same plantation, the slaves almost universally developed a relationship to the land in the southern region of the country because of the agricultural mode of production used in that area. Cotton and later tobacco and sugar cane kept them there.

### **Civil War**

The separate colonies with ties to England developed their own local and centralized parliamentary forms. More importantly, because of climate and soil variations, different economic structures were established. The North was diversified with small farmers, artisans, and small scale manufacturing. The South was overwhelmingly based on large plantations with trades developed to support the plantation economy.

After the colonies severed their relationship with England through declaring independence and waging armed struggle, this growth and development along the above-mentioned lines was accelerated. The War of Independence was the first phase in the U.S. bourgeois democratic revolution. Americans were no longer subject to the British king, a republic was formed and a wider form of suffrage, although not universal, was established.

The two sections of the country were united in the same parliament, but pursued their separate courses of economic and social development. Conflicts continued to emerge over the direction of the expanding nation. The Northern bourgeoisie wanted to complete the bourgeois revolution, that is, to consolidate its control of the national economy. It could not expand industry in the South with the maintenance of the system of chattel slavery and the restriction of capitalism in that realm. Market possibilities in the South were restricted and the opportunities for capitalist exploitation of the West were being thwarted. Each time a state was to come into the Union, the conflict intensified.

When the South could no longer win its struggle through the Congress, it seceded from the Union. The Northern bourgeoisie decided to wage armed struggle to keep its republic

Slave insurrections were the beginning of the long struggle of the Afro-American people for liberation.



intact and to give it access to the much sought after Southern market and capital.

This struggle was fundamentally to free the slaves, not because of the subjective desires of Lincoln, the Union leadership and industrial capitalists, but because the objective development of history demanded it. Lincoln stated that his aim was to maintain the Union and that it was immaterial to him whether or not slavery continued to exist. To break the back of the Confederacy and to open up the entire country to the expansion of industrial and finance capital, the slaves had to be freed. For those who had been concentrating on the emancipation of the slaves, this was the moment they had waited

for. The view that said that moral suasion would liberate the slaves was defeated. History had vindicated Henry Highland Garnett, David Walker and all the others who knew that only military action through rebellions or full scale war would clear the path to freedom.

While Congress and Lincoln wavered on the issue, Henry Garnett and other progressive Afro-Americans urged that Afro-Americans be able to take up arms in the -struggle for freedom. Marx and Engels, in Europe, agitated for this in letters and articles. They pointed out that this in itself was a profoundly important revolutionary act. Around 186,000 Afro-American troops served in Northern armies. They came from working class and petty bourgeois circles in the North and from free and fugitive slave elements in the South. Others took up arms against their masters and Confederate troops as the Union armies approached.

### **Reconstruction**

With the victory of the Union troops, the first stage of the second phase of the bourgeois democratic revolution had been decided in favor of the bourgeoisie. They were now in a position to consolidate their rule in the country, penetrate the Southern economy and develop the rest of the country to the advantage of finance and industrial capital. This addressed one of the elements absent from the victory of the Revolutionary War, the first phase of the bourgeois revolution in the U.S.

The Reconstruction period from 1866 to 1877 was, as Marx called it, the truly revolutionary period of the struggle. In effect, it was the second stage of the second phase of the bourgeois revolution. Here the other missing element was addressed, the extension of democracy to everyone within the boundaries of the state.

With the defeat of the planters, the conditions were created for bringing Afro-Americans into the Anglo-American nation on the basis of democracy and full equality. This would require the extension of full political rights and access to economic freedom such as it could be under capitalism. This economic freedom essentially meant that Afro-Americans would be free to sell their labor on the open market like the other wage laborers and that they could own land and farm for subsistence or commodity production. To be sure, such conditions would have led to the integration of Afro-Americans into U.S. society and eventually amalgamation into the American or Anglo-American nation. This could only be done, of course, on the basis of democracy and full equality.

It was at this time that the Afro-American Nation emerged. Although it had long been in formation, the Union victory in the Civil War broke the fetters on its development and engendered two other characteristics of the nation.

At this time, a common economic life among the freedmen began to manifest itself. Class formation and stratification became more pronounced. Added to the free artisans and skilled laborers were four million former slaves who were agricultural workers. The shackles of slavery and the stifled social climate were removed allowing for the development of teachers, more clergy, some doctors and lawyers, and a variety of small



entrepreneurs. In spite of the fact that many of those elements who now had slightly more freedom to use their capital in pursuit of more were in the North, class differentiation clearly existed in the South among the freedmen. The defeat of slavery allowed for greater movement giving rise to social and political discourse. The possibility for contact with people in surrounding areas and in the region was made a reality.

Moreover, communication was increased, first, of course, by virtue of the movement but also the circulation of literature and the media. Newspapers from the North and publications in the South brought the Afro-American people closer together.

Finally, commerce was enhanced, in that a previously non-existent market was created. Heretofore, slaves could not and did not purchase commodities of any type. Now Afro-American businessmen could enter business, somewhat free of the pressure and "squeeze out" of the white capitalist who would not let him make a cent if he did not have to. On the other hand, Afro-Americans would have access to services not provided by whites, for example morticians, barbers, insurance salesmen, etc.

As Stalin observed, some pre-capitalist forms of production had to be removed. Slavery, a clearly pre-capitalist mode, was swept away. Like classical feudalism, slavery made for great isolation. The plantation and feudal manor were entities unto themselves and precluded communication and exchange among those within the self-contained structures.

The succeeding mode of production, the plantation sharecropping system, while a pre-capitalist mode of production, was less restrictive, particularly as it relates to movement and the purchase of commodities.

Among the various forces that have examined the question of common economic life, there have been two erroneous tendencies. On one hand, almost anything that resembles economic activity is accepted as common economic life. The other demands sophisticated economic factors to meet the requirements for a common economy. The view that generally requires "no bottom line" sees slavery, sharecropping, and wage slavery as different but common economies because the overwhelming majority of Afro-American people were engaged in these modes of production at one time. James Forman, former executive secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, leader of the Black Workers Congress and part of the more militant wing of the reformist movement, goes so far as to say that "during slavery, Blacks helped to develop their own economy although they did not control its distribution and profits." This is absurd because slaves and their labor power were owned. As was noted earlier, a common economy requires a division of labor, exchange and a market.

These must be minimum requirements. Stalin said that there must be economic cohesion. This means a division of labor between people, communities and regions; that no area be economically isolated and there be a rise of capitalism. Basic economic cohesion means a division of labor in parts of the nation, the development of urban commerce and agriculture, communications and transportation systems, and a national class structure. It

has been said by others that "what concerns us here is whether or not a people share in the same economic life, engage in mutual production and exchange." The Afro-American people in the South do these things.

The configuration of an **advanced** nation has also been spelled out. It includes a monetary system, banks and taxes. Thus, "there are degrees of economic integrity of the nations depending upon imperialist interference and control." Understanding this question of integrity, its limits and boundaries, is key to evaluating the common economy among a people.

As one would expect, the *Line of March (LOM)*, journal of a group of bourgeois intellectuals vying for hegemony in the communist movement, use the highest standards possible in evaluating a national economy. They look for a highly developed class structure with one class exploiting another. Since they did not see Black slave masters exploiting Black slaves, or Afro-American landowners exploiting Afro-American sharecroppers, or Afro-American capitalists exploiting Afro-American workers, then they do not see a common economy and they call this the "dialectics of relations." In a vile attempt to liquidate the national question the *LOM* specifies these conditions for a common economy: "There must be macro-economic phenomena like 1) an emerging monetary system and credit system; 2) a suppressed but distinctive average rate of interest; 3) a germinal but separate equity market." They go on to say: "...these are phenomena which even colonized nations (i.e., real nations which are colonized) stubbornly exhibit despite colonial edicts designed to snuff them out."

What trash is this! They fail to mention that if these "macro" phenomena do exist, they are the product of imperialist penetration and organization of the national economy. The monetary system, rate of interest, etc. are the same as in the metropole or even if they are varied, are based on the same standard. To top it off, *LOM* offers no examples of these phenomena. We know for sure that if these so-called criteria were used to evaluate a number of contemporary liberation movements, they would have to be denied self-determination. The Polisario in the old Spanish Sahara, which is "near and dear" to *LOM* forces, would certainly be eliminated. South Africa, with no developed Black bourgeoisie or separate Black economy would be destined forever for imperialist/apartheid oppression, at least until the socialist revolution. The same applies to Namibia. What we have here is a double standard.

In regard to a separate economy, nowhere in the Marxist literature does it specify that a national economy must be distinct or separate. This is an invention of the *LOM*. In fact, Stalin points out in the example of the Georgian region of Czarist Russia how imperialist interference even prevents this separate development. This is especially so for those nations that evolved after the period of rising capitalism, that is during the current imperialist epoch, when the shackles on national development were firmly in place. All of the colonies, semi-colonies or dependencies are living proof of this. Although Stalin in the *National-Colonial Question* did not address this directly or make what one might call allowances for this, his later work and that of the Comintern go into this in considerable depth.

Again, in regard to integrity (here meaning "sophistication" and separateness), comrades in the once revolutionary CPUSA during the debate in 1937 made these observations. Haywood said: "It is therefore absurd, in the epoch of imperialism, i.e. in the period of world market relations to speak about economic ties among an oppressed people as 'distinct' in the sense of separate from those of the oppressing nation." And in particular reference to the Afro-American people, Foster indicates that Afro-Americans developed under circumstances far more difficult than many other national groups. The chain and whip, the revolutionary fight of the Civil War and Reconstruction and Klan terror and white supremacist reaction are some of the prominent conditions of extreme difficulty they faced.

Finally, Patterson said, "...the Negro people became a separate nation in the process of an abortive struggle to be included as an integral part of the oppressing nation."

Yet, the *LOM* can say no common economy exists because Afro-Americans are tied to the white economy through the credit system, production, distribution, articulation and consumption. Then, in a distorted assault on the "Black Nation thesis" and the common economy, they say that those who uphold the thesis claim that the sharecropping system was the common economy, which is not true. In any case, they go on to say that it was not separate because it had whites participating in it. What else can be said?

Today, the economy in the Black Belt reflects the hand of the imperialists; Afro-American capital has been stifled. This is more pronounced in the South, where U.S. imperialism has restricted its markets, not allowing movement of the Afro American bourgeoisie into heavy or medium industry. They are restricted to the traditional areas of service: cleaning, maintenance, beauty care, funerals and insurance. In banking, Afro-Americans are restricted to small local or regional banking institutions which have little capital and cannot provide loans for manufacturing, etc.

The total number of Afro-American-owned firms within the 12 Southern states is 97,665. This includes the entire states of Texas and Maryland. 82% of these firms do not have paid employees. Those that do only account for 62,866 workers in these states. The majority of selected services and retail firms (health, legal and business services as well as food stores, miscellaneous retail, automotive dealers and service stations) are small and employ few, if any, workers.

Is there a bourgeoisie? What is its character? Because of the above-mentioned distortions and deformation of national development, there is no real national bourgeoisie of the classical type that has emerged and pursued an independent existence. A case may be made for some firms that are not in need of large sums of financial capital from imperialist bankers who are not producing for other larger monopoly-controlled firms, such as auto parts or transistor manufacturers.

The Afro-American owners or controllers of wealth, i.e. capital, are deeply connected to white imperialists through numerous financial and political arrangements. As such, they do not stand on their own; we are not speaking of a separate economy here, but the fact

that the Afro-American bourgeoisie is not relatively independent. It is more comprador in nature. Fundamentally, the comprador bourgeoisie are "native merchants engaged in trade with imperialist centers, whose interests are in the continuation of imperialist exploitation. They act as agents for exploiting the masses in the colonial countries." Webster defines comprador as a "Chinese agent engaged by a foreign establishment in China to have charge of its Chinese employees and to act as intermediaries in business affairs." What Webster draws out is the representative or agent nature of the comprador.

However, the essential point here is not to find the compact categories that fit, or to create new ones. The main issue is that Afro-American managers or owners of capital do so on behalf of or in conjunction with the white capitalists of the imperialist nation. The white ruling class helped give them life but will not let them grow and has the power to crush them at will. Therefore, the Afro-American bourgeoisie's class interest lies in maintaining the status quo, that is, a close economic and political relationship with monopoly capital. It has not in the past or is it likely in the future to call for national independence. In fact, the comprador bourgeoisie opposes independence tooth and nail. It is not outside the realm of possibility that some of these elements will be won over to the struggle for national emancipation but the strategy for the national liberation movement cannot rely on them.

Examples of would be compradors of the Afro-American people with connections inside and outside the national territory are the Urban League, Leon Sullivan's Opportunities Industrial Centers (OIC), and Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH, all of whom receive millions of dollars from numerous corporate sources, although packaged differently. Car dealers and liquor distributors are other examples, as are the many Afro-American franchise owners.

This analysis is based on a Marxist analysis of the political economy. Reasonable, is it not? No. Not for the *LOM* scholars. For them, the "comprador capitalists are those engaged in the procurement or realization of (imperialist) industrial capital and branch operations of (imperialist) bank capital." They need to have some state power, an army, a police force and control of financial, cultural and educational organs. *LOM* says that we overestimate the power and number of the bourgeoisie. This is not true. We act "as if it had a hand in actually running a nation...Real comprador capitalists wield billions of dollars of capital, not to speak of armies and state machines, on behalf of the imperialist system," says *LOM*.

Of course we do not say the comprador bourgeoisie is running a nation. We know imperialism prevents this. Furthermore, within the imperialist boundaries this is not necessary or desirable. Where are you, Namibian bourgeoisie?

### **Common Territory**

As stated before, the plantation area of the South is the common territory. The Afro-American people occupied it in common by virtue of their role in the slave economy. With the new conditions after the Civil War, with movement not being restricted, the

opportunity developed for local and regional relationships to develop. This gave way to what Stalin called lengthy and systematic discourse. This was facilitated by trade, migrations, marriage and education. The isolation of the plantation was gone forever.

Once again, the *LOM* says that part of what we include in the Black Belt was not settled until 20 to 40 years after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Just because Blacks did not occupy it from the time of their arrival in North America does not negate or diminish its place as a homeland. Slaves did eventually live and work on this land. Afro-American sharecroppers plowed it for years and the Afro-American masses reside there today. No date citation that distorts the overall history can alter this fact.

A secondary question that arises in connection with territory is that of majority/minority. Whether or not the Afro-American people constitute a majority in the entire territory, in individual counties or wherever, are questions that have come to be used as a false criteria. This is a case where a fact, a concrete condition at a particular time, was turned into a principle which has been used to liquidate the very thing around which the question was raised. Lenin, Stalin, the Comintern, Haywood, etc. did not "select" the Black Belt because it had the majority of Afro-Americans or because they were the majority in over 250 counties. The Black Belt was identified as the territory of the Afro-American Nation because that is where the nation objectively developed. The numbers and percentages are only a result of that.

Nowhere in the Marxist-Leninist discussion of the national question does majority get raised as a prerequisite. Were there not several nations in the Soviet Union that did not constitute a majority in their territory but were granted rights of an oppressed nation by the revolutionary socialist government of the early Soviet Union?

This is not to belittle the rights of other peoples in the territory, but they cannot be pitted against the democratic right of a nation to self-determination up to and including secession.

The last point connected to territory is the issue of population size and stability. Much has been made about the continuously sinking percentage of Afro-Americans in the Black Belt. In spite of the various migrations necessitated by several things, the majority of Afro-American people – approximately 52% or 15 million still reside in the South. The others are spread over three other geographical regions.

What must be noted here, comrades, is that in absolute numbers, the Afro-American population has increased, but more importantly, the most critical factor is evident, and that is that the population **persists** on that territory. It was there in 1800 and it is there now. And as will be mentioned elsewhere, a reverse migration, although not political, is in progress.

The common economic life of the nation evolved during the battle for Reconstruction. The territorial and economic issues discussed earlier were intertwined with the massive developments taking place during that period. In the political realm, there were numerous

conventions of freedmen that passed various manifestos calling for freedom and democracy, economic and political power. The legislatures with large numbers of Afro-Americans and poor farmers enacted revolutionary reforms. They disenfranchised Confederate leaders and provided free public education. The Union Leagues and local militias took up the task of defending the gains that were being made. Many small farms and small enterprises were opened by the newly freed slaves. The land question was addressed by many, but not resolved. It is ironic that the masses in the state conventions and some of the Radical Republicans themselves in the Congress and the legislatures never called for the same. In the South Carolina convention where it was discussed, the most that the petty bourgeois leadership called for was the **sale** of the land in order to erode the base of a possible return to power by the planters. The petty bourgeoisie could not attack the "sanctity" of bourgeois property relations. By the end of the Reconstruction, the nation had emerged and matured. It was consolidated by the end of the century (1900).

Youth in the Black Belt homeland of the Afro-American people, 1982



### **Development of Afro-American National Minority**

A sizeable and significant national minority developed outside the Black Belt in numerous Northern cities, especially the large industrial, commercial and cultural centers. It was a long-term process that was almost exclusively related to the migration of the Southern Afro-American population.

It was constituted initially by freedmen who were released from indenture in the North and sometimes in the South prior to the early 1700's. In addition, there were slaves who escaped from the plantation. In the North, they developed a certain degree of economic strength through small businesses and farming. For this reason, they assumed the intellectual and political leadership of the Black freedom movement.

Racist terror during and after the Reconstruction forced many Blacks north. The Ku Klux Klan forced thousands off the land.

Another wave of migrations took place just prior to World War I when war industry created great demands for labor. Many jobs opened up temporarily. This development began to converge with the crisis in cotton caused by the boll weevil in successive planting seasons in the 1920's.

Again, in the 1920's, the re-emergence of the organized Klan caused greater migrations.

Apart from the concentrated waves caused by acute social and economic contradictions, there is always an ongoing migration. After high school, Afro-American youth head north for economic opportunity and to escape the stench of national oppression and racism. The deep Southern states lose their sons and daughters to Chicago, Detroit and points west. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia sent theirs to New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia primarily.

Because of less direct terror and repression, the national minority areas produced and still produce much of the leadership of the Afro-American movement. Culture, education, etc. developed more freely in these areas.

### **Origin of U.S. Multinational State**

The American nation is basically Anglo in its origins. This stems primarily from the fact that the original colonists were English and brought with them the culture and institutions of England. Although they have undergone significant change, they remain at base Anglo. This includes religion, music and literary tradition. The ruling class has insured the continuation of this phenomenon.

However, almost from the beginning, the mass of the population was multinational. Anyone who has done the slightest study of the history of the U.S. knows that there were numerous French, Dutch, and Spanish settlements. From the Canadian border to Florida to the Mississippi River, all of these peoples and their cultures became a part of the American amalgam.

Through later immigrations from Western Europe came the Irish, this being triggered by the agricultural crisis in Ireland and oppression of the Irish people by British imperialism. Then came the Swedes, Germans, and later, the Italians. They brought with them not only their languages and customs, but skills acquired in the growing industrial sector of Europe, as well as the political experiences of the bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe.

Later came immigrants from Eastern Europe. Many came from Russia, Poland, Hungary, etc. They were escaping the pogroms and political repression of the Czar. They came with a history of political organization and the ideas of socialism.

From Asia came the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. As California opened up more and more Pacific immigrants came to trade or seek work. The Western section of the national railroad system was built to a large extent by Chinese labor. They worked in Western mines as well.

Just as white supremacy had been aimed against Afro-Americans and Indians, the ruling class used chauvinism against the newest members of the working class. At various times, Congress excluded the immigration of different groups and nationalities. The justification was often different but the intent and effect was the same. Asians have been excluded. Eastern Europeans have been excluded. The acceptance of low wages and propagation of the ideas of socialism have been used as justifications.

Theories of genetic inferiority were developed in connection with exclusionary acts. The "studies" were financed by the Rockefellers and served as the basis for the Nazi theories of the 1930's and the views of Shockley and Jensen today.

### **Development of U.S. Monopoly Capital After the Civil War To WWI**

With the consolidation of capital after the Civil War, U.S. capitalism began the rapid process of development. Victory over the planters meant that the abundant resources and markets of the Black Belt and the entire South were now under its control. Industry grew more rapidly than in other capitalist countries because it did not have the fetters of feudal/aristocratic economic, political and social control with the exception of the South, which had been vanquished. The proletariat grew rapidly, not only as a by-product of rapidly growing industry, but also because of the large scale immigration from Europe.

U.S. capitalism entered the imperialist epoch in an exceptionally strong position but still in need of resources, markets and expansion. This expansion was also rapid. The theft of Indian lands continued as the country extended west. Immediately after the Civil War, the troops were removed from the South (which served to weaken the Reconstruction governments) to fight the rebellious Indian nations and tribes.

In the Southwest, the developing Chicano people in the New Mexico territory were the next victims of expansionism. The South had started before the Civil War by trying to purchase Texas as a slave state. This did not work. Therefore, they sent in settlers who precipitated a war with Mexico that led to the declaration of the Republic of Texas. In 1848, President Polk dispatched troops to New Mexico where they seized control from the weak comprador government that was run by the central government in Mexico. The Chicano and Indian people mounted resistance which continues right up to today.

Industrial and finance capital had to expand externally if it was to respond to its internal laws. It concocted the so-called Monroe Doctrine which gave it the "right" to take action anywhere in the hemisphere to protect the interests of American imperialism.

The natural target for this imperialist justification was Spain. It was, in fact, an oppressor nation with a number of colonies. Not that U.S. imperialism was especially concerned



with fighting oppression, but Spain was weak and undergoing internal changes that were destroying its ability to maintain an "empire." The U.S. justified a declaration of war against Spain in 1898 by blowing up its own naval ship, the Maine, while it sat in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. After a short war, the U.S. occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam.

Thus, from 1848 to 1898, the U.S. imperialists enlarged their empire and established the system of oppression which engendered the liberation movements of the native peoples, the Chicano Nation, the Afro-American Nation, the Puerto Rican Nation, Cuba, the Philippines and Guam.

### **The Marxist-Leninist Program on the Afro-American National Question**

Any Marxist-Leninist program must include strategy and tactics for dealing with the oppression of nations. The democratic right of peoples to order their own affairs and determine what kinds of relations they will have with other nations is fundamental. This is described in the slogan, "the right to self-determination up to and including secession." The meaning of this slogan has been fully defined during this century, first in struggle with the social chauvinists of the Second International, later with the Trotskyists and other opportunists and today, with various revisionists and liquidators of the national question. During these years of fierce struggle and debate, it became clear that self-determination is meaningless unless the oppressed people have the option of creating their own political entity.

While all nations have the **right** to self-determination and secession, they are not **obliged** to secede. In fighting for the right, an oppressed nation must put itself in a position whereby it can exercise the right, that is, without interference, control and coercion from the oppressor nation. The material expression of this comes from the decision of a plebiscite or referendum. When we say they are not obliged, it means that in every situation it may not be necessary for a nation to secede. In other words, the national question does not always get solved in the same way. And, as with everything else, time, place and conditions must be considered.

The ultimate decision is up to the people of the oppressed nation. Communists always agitate in the direction of the proletariat's best interest at that time. Of course, numerous political, economic and social factors have to be considered. If the communist view is at odds with the will of the people, agitation and education must be used. And, if ultimately a nation decides to secede, the communists must support it in its efforts at national construction. This is in contrast to Bob Avakian of the former Revolutionary Union, who once said "with gun in hand, (he) would join the ranks of those opposing secession."

It is clear from Comintern documents that it advocated not simply verbal recognition of the right to self-determination in the Black Belt territory but the fight for self-determination itself. This was illustrated by its consideration of whether socialist revolution would provide the path to Afro-American self-determination, or Afro-American rebellion would open the door to socialist revolution. It obviously viewed self-

determination under capitalism as a possibility – one that would come through a **rebellion**.

The CPUSA's practice suggests that it really did not believe or desire this possibility. With some rare exceptions, it never organized people in the Black Belt on a local level around electing Afro-American county and town officials as a form of struggle. It never addressed the question of power and nowhere does it speak to organizing a rebellion. We have not seen or heard of any discussion where the Party called for forming a national revolutionary front that would carry out the political, economic and military tasks of a war of national emancipation. Without doing this, it supported the view that the national question could only begin to be resolved under socialism.

Under today's conditions, two things call for communists, national revolutionaries and democrats to fight for the right to self-determination and **for secession** now. For one, U.S. imperialism has shown that it will not grant the Afro-American people true freedom and justice. In spite of gains and some reforms, the yoke of national oppression grows heavier and more deadly than before.

Secondly, from the strategic point of view, we need to determine the various contradictions and their motion at this time. Labor versus capital continues to be the fundamental contradiction in the U.S. In fact, in the era of imperialism, it is the underlying contradiction that shapes all the other problems of the world. Yet, in the U.S. today, the contradiction between U.S. imperialism and the Afro-American people is the principal contradiction, the one at the sharpest level of struggle or development. The Afro-American people are under sharp attack by the police and Klan terror; there are massive cutbacks in essential support programs such as welfare and food stamps; depression-like unemployment figures; the end of affirmative action programs; attacks on the Voting Rights Act; anti-busing legislation and its attendant movement. The Afro-American people are responding in different ways. There is a consciousness, an awareness of these attacks on them. They are organizing and they are rebelling, although spontaneously.

The working class as a whole, particularly its white section, has not developed a militant, powerful or organized response to U.S. imperialism. There is, however, a growing fightback developing all over the country. Still, it is not on the same level as the Black national struggle, spontaneous or conscious. The ruling class state is pleased by this rather passive response to the acute crisis of U.S. capitalism. It fears the kind of response that the Thatcher policies have given rise to in England. It has done a good job of repressing resistance through ideology and the help of the trade union bureaucrats. The Reagan wing of the ruling class is worried that it will show up at the polls in the next two years as support for the Democratic Party. Of course, they would prefer to see the response take this form, and so would the labor bureaucrats.

Comrades, if we are looking for the weak link in the imperialist chain in the U.S., it is this contradiction that we must identify. Only by taking hold of it will we be able to launch any serious blows in the direction of national liberation and socialism in the U.S.

This struggle for self-determination will help create the conditions for a revolutionary movement of the workers of the U.S. against capitalism and for socialism.

For communists in general, and white communists in particular, the life and death battle against white supremacy must be taken up more vigorously and more intensely than ever before. White supremacy was developed by the southern planters and the colonial ruling class when they established permanent bondage for Africans. The earlier system of indenture for Blacks and whites was dropped. This immediately created privileges for whites in that they were not in bondage. Freedom became the first and chief privilege and a whole body of thinking was created to justify it.

This privilege has been extended to jobs, wages, working conditions, housing, education, health care and other areas. These privileges are not as great as they are in South Africa, where white workers sometimes earn \$5.00 more an hour for performing the same job as Black South Africans. In that situation, the white workers have and see a real material interest in maintaining imperialist domination of South Africa with its apartheid system. In the U.S., the privileges are only relative and do not provide a material basis for the maintenance of U.S. imperialism. Still, these privileges are the basis for white supremacy.

The ruling class has historically used white supremacy as one of its chief tools in continuing capitalist exploitation and national oppression. Within the working class, the main purveyor of this ideology is the labor aristocracy, the skilled workers and labor bureaucrats. They have the greatest interest in maintaining privilege and national oppression. They play on and organize white supremacist sentiment that plagues large sections of the working class: Remember, Anglo-American national consciousness is based on white supremacy.

The fight against this poison and ideology that is alien to a class conscious proletariat is of utmost importance. White communists must lead the fight in the class against white chauvinism. This means struggle among white workers in the shops, unions, bars and communities and in the revolutionary organizations. In spite of the fact that the Afro-American people are taking up the main defensive fight against the Klan, the Klan will not ultimately be smashed unless white workers themselves wield the hammer that does it. If this is not done soon, the Klan will have inspired many white workers to participate in the "race war" it has agitated for and waited for, for so long,

White workers must struggle against white chauvinism, white supremacy, racism. The struggle cannot be limited to uniting with Afro-Americans on basic trade union issues, e.g. wages, hours, etc. Do not get us wrong; this is good and, in numerous cases, is extremely difficult if not impossible to do. Yet, it is only the economism so touted by the opportunists. In terms of the workers' struggle in the economic arena, white workers must consciously struggle against the various privileges. This is key to breaking down the mistrust and disunity. Eventually, but not after the **whole** class fights against privilege (this will never happen anyway), white workers must support the right of the Afro-American people to self-determination in both words and deeds, Class conscious white

workers fighting against privilege and white supremacy and for Afro-American self-determination will be striking the real death blows at U.S. imperialism. It is the task of communists to skillfully use Marxism-Leninism, history and objective conditions to create the subjective outlook for this essential segment of class war in the U.S.

## **Against Revisionism on the Afro-American National Question**

### **Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist**

The significance of a correct Marxist-Leninist line on the nature of the national struggles and a correct scientific guide to action on these questions cannot be underestimated. In the period of imperialism, the national struggles have become a significant part of the international proletarian revolution. The struggle for socialism and the defeat of imperialism cannot succeed if the national revolutionary struggles are not allied with the international proletarian revolution.

The true test of a communist party's stand on the national question, in general, is the stand it takes toward those nations oppressed by the bourgeoisie of its "own" nation. This was one of the tests that divided the Second International revisionists from the true revolutionaries of the Third International. According to Lenin:

Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its 'own' country, must support in deed, not merely in word – every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples. [LCW, Vol. 31, p. 209]

A communist party cannot hope to succeed in winning masses away from the bourgeoisie and to the cause of revolution if it pursues a policy of national chauvinism and fails to break with its "own" bourgeoisie. This applies to revolutionaries in the United States no less than in all other imperialist countries. Therefore, by the very nature of the battle between the international proletariat and the bourgeoisie, we must take a firm and correct stand against the oppression of nations in the United States.

The general revisionism and failure of the communist movement in the United States to build an enduring revolutionary vanguard party is due, in no small part, to the sorry history of revisionism on the Afro-American national question. The main revisionist deviation on this question is that of great nation chauvinism – the revisionists of the oppressor nation refuse to defend the right to political secession for Afro-Americans, or

do so in such a manner as to gut it of all revolutionary content. This revisionist stand allows the bourgeois ideology of great nation chauvinism to influence the Anglo-American workers and encourages the development of bourgeois nationalism among the oppressed Afro-Americans. This revisionism tends to unite the workers of the oppressor and oppressed nations with their "own" bourgeoisie, instead of building proletarian internationalism.

The proliferation of revisionist theories on the Afro-American national question stems from several sources. There is a social stratum and class base for the growth of revisionism in general. This base is the creation of a bribed stratum among the workers, the higher paid section, or the labor aristocracy. Out of the super-profits derived from the exploitation of other nations, the imperialist bourgeoisie is able to create a higher paid, privileged section of workers which capitulates and takes the stand of class collaboration. Sections of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia are also bribed by the imperialists and supply a constant stream of apologists for the policy of national oppression. These privileged strata are fertile ground for the growth of bourgeois ideology in the working class movement.

The ideas of white supremacy and great nation chauvinism have been highly developed by the bourgeoisie. Elaborate pseudo-scientific theories have been developed to promote the myth that the "Caucasian" race is genetically superior and the "Negro" race inferior. These theories represented the mainstream of bourgeois science until the liberation struggles of the 1950's and 1960's forced a change. However, many bourgeois scientists still promote ideas of white supremacy.

The influence of the labor aristocracy encourages the growth of philistinism and cowardice; revisionists infected with these views have no faith in the masses or in the ability of the working class to achieve socialist revolution in the U.S. Consequently, these "leaders" fear to openly confront white supremacy and national chauvinism. They have no faith that the Anglo-American working class can be won to the side of internationalism.

In addition, the reactionary strata allow the flowering of social chauvinism of the Second International type that glorifies the U.S. bourgeoisie as somehow unique in the history of the world, i.e. not exploiters of the working class and oppressed nations. This social chauvinism says the U.S. bourgeoisie will allow socialism to be built without revolutionary struggle. It fears the break up of the U.S. imperialist state because it believes the bourgeois concoction that the imperialist U.S. is the "greatest country on earth." This social chauvinism covers over the bloody truth that U.S. imperialism is built upon a foundation of robbery, kidnapping and genocidal murder, the systematic plunder of nations, and the ruthless exploitation of the working class.

In reviewing the history of revisionism on the Afro-American national question, most of our attention will be focused on the Communist Party USA. Firstly, because its adoption and implementation of a revolutionary position in the 1930's was a clear break with revisionism and, secondly, because its early deviations and subsequent decline into the

most disgusting revisionism previewed the multitude of revisionist formulations seen today. Despite the CPUSA's extreme decline, in numbers and influence it still exerts a strong negative influence over sections of the working class and intelligentsia in the U.S. Therefore, exposure of its revisionism is of more than historical importance. It must be defeated in order to carry out a successful struggle for Afro-American liberation and socialist revolution.

### **The Socialist Party – Forerunner Of Lovestoneite Revisionism**

The stand of the Socialist Party (SP) in its early years was that of rank, undisguised chauvinism against the Afro-American people. The official position of the SP was that the extreme oppression and exploitation of Afro-Americans was not any different than that of the working class as a whole and that it would be resolved by the triumph of socialism and not before. Eugene Debs stated, "We have nothing special to offer the Negro and we cannot make separate appeals to all races. The Socialist Party is the Party of the whole working class, regardless of color." [Quoted in Foster, *The Negro People in American History*, p. 403].

Lenin commented:

The Industrial Workers of the World is for the Negroes. The attitude of the Socialist Party is 'not quite unanimous.' A single manifesto on behalf of the Negroes, in 1901. Only one!!!... (In the state of Mississippi, the Socialists organize the Negroes 'in separate local groups!!' [LCW, Vol. 39, pp. 590-91].

Indeed, the manifesto of 1901 was the only statement on the special conditions of the Afro-Americans that a national body of the SP adopted for at least 12 years. In fact, some of the right-wing leaders adopted the openly chauvinist stand of the white supremacists: "Thus, Victor Berger... [Socialist] Party leader, said in his paper, the *Social Democratic Herald*, in May, 1902: 'There can be no doubt that the Negroes and mulattoes constitute a lower race.'" [Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 406]

Individuals in the SP raised criticisms of this line, but without a split with the right-wing leaders no real change could be effected. In 1919, the split between the rightists and the revolutionary section of the SP came out in the open and eventually resulted in the formation of the CPUSA.

### **Lovestone's Revisionism and the CPUSA's Liquidationist Stand on the Afro-American National Question, 1919-1921**

The CPUSA was formed out of the left wing of the Socialist Party and revolutionary elements of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Many of the Socialist Party's revisionist views were carried over into the CPUSA. Jay Lovestone, the Party's chairman, put forward a theory of "American exceptionalism," claiming the peculiar conditions of the U.S. were such that class struggle would fade away and socialism could be brought

about without a revolution. When applied to the Afro-Americans' struggle, Lovestone's view was that

the 'industrial revolution' will sweep away the remnants of slavery in the agricultural South, and will proletarianize the Negro peasantry, so that the Negro question, as a special national question, would thereby be presumably solved, or could be put off until the time of the socialist revolution in America. [*1930 Comintern Resolution*, p. 22].

Lovestone viewed the "Negro peasantry" as a reserve of reaction with no revolutionary potential. There is nothing in Marxist-Leninist theory to support these views. Firstly, while the national question at that time was closely linked with the peasant question, the two are not synonymous. The peasant question became especially bound up with the national question during the colonial period, when the great masses of oppressed peoples were peasants. It continues to be bound up with the peasant question today because in many oppressed nations the bulk of the population remains peasants. But even in his polemics for recognition of this fact, Stalin points out that the two questions are not identical:

It is quite true that the national question must not be identified with the peasant question, for in addition to peasant questions, the national question includes such questions as national culture, national statehood, etc. [Stalin, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, p. 297].

While the national question is bound up with the situation of the peasants, the transformation of the peasants of an oppressed nation into proletarians, and semi-proletarians in no way resolves the question of "national statehood."

For example, Puerto Rico, a colony of the U.S., formerly had a large and sharply exploited peasant class. The development of industry under conditions of imperialist exploitation has virtually eliminated this peasant class, with the majority of the Puerto Ricans now laboring as proletarians, or semi-proletarians. However, Puerto Rico is still an oppressed nation and, if anything, the revolutionary national movement is increasing in strength. Therefore, the elimination of the Afro-American peasantry through industrialization would not eliminate the special national demands of the Afro-American people.

Secondly, the notion that communists can wait passively for the development of industrial capitalism to "solve" the peasant question also goes against all Marxist-Leninist teachings, and ignores one of the main allies of the proletarian revolution. In his *Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions* of 1920, Lenin stated:

With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important... to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship and against all manifestations or

survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character by establishing the closest possible alliance between the West-European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement... [LCW, Vol. 31, p. 149].

Thus, Lovestone's idea of waiting for the industrial revolution to "sweep away" the remnants of slavery runs contrary to the teachings of Lenin, and the claim that the sharecroppers were a reserve of reaction ignores the revolutionary aspects of the struggle against the landowners and against the feudal remnants in the South.

The transformation of the vast majority of the Afro-American people into proletarians and semi-proletarians has merely altered some of the forms of exploitation, but the severe denial of political rights, the social inequities, the insults and restrictions, as well as the terror and murder at the hands of the KKK, the sheriffs, the police and other terrorist gangs have not lessened in the Afro-American Nation. In many instances they are on the increase. Any improvement in the lot of the Afro-American people is a direct result of the decades of revolutionary struggle against national oppression.

Lovestone's view that the struggle against national persecution of the Afro-Americans should be postponed until after the socialist revolution in the U.S. is objectively chauvinist and it makes the U.S. proletariat an accomplice of the U.S. bourgeoisie in oppressing the Afro-American Nation. Lovestone disregarded the revolutionary energy of the struggle against national oppression. But Lovestone's views were especially revolting in the face of the particularly barbaric conditions of "lynch law" and the Jim Crow system to which the Afro-Americans were subjected at the time he championed those views.

Despite Lovestone's revisionist leadership, the CPUSA did make a break with the total chauvinism of the Socialist Party. Under the increasing influence of Lenin, Stalin, and the Third International, the Communist Party began to take up work among the Afro-Americans. While limited by the theory that the problem was solely one of "racism," the CPUSA began organizing the Negro proletariat into unions and formulating demands against the oppression of the Afro-American people. In 1925, the CPUSA formed the American Negro Labor Congress, with a program directed to

lead the struggles of the Negro workers and farmers against terrorism, lynching, mob violence, police brutality, segregation and all forms of race hatred; for equal pay for equal work; for better working conditions; for the organization of Negro workers into trade unions on the basis of complete equality. [Ford, *The Negro and the Democratic Front*, p. 81].

The ANLC led a number of strikes and worked to bring Afro-Americans into unions which were not restricted on the basis of nationality.

William Z. Foster states that the CPUSA in its early period fought against the oppression of Negroes and against white chauvinism in the Party:



First, the communists understood the key significance to the Negro people of a place in industry and in unions and they fought relentlessly to break down every barrier in this respect. Second, there was the special stress that the Communists laid upon the vital issue of social equality. Third, from the outset the Communists also realized the basic need to fight against white chauvinism. Fourth, the Communists made clear the enormous political significance to white workers of the fight for Negro rights. Fifth, the Communists, realizing the tremendous importance of the Negro question, placed it high on their program and gave it all possible support and emphasis. [Foster, *History of the Communist Party USA*, p. 233].

While this was no doubt true for the revolutionary elements in the Party, the revisionist leadership of Lovestone and his clique undermined these efforts. As the Comintern pointed out, Lovestone's revisionism allowed the rankest white supremacy and denial of rights of Afro-Americans to go on even within the ranks of the Party.

In Gary, white members of the Workers' Party protested against Negroes eating in the restaurant controlled by the Party. In Detroit, party members yielding to pressure, drove out Negro comrades from a social given in aid of the miners on strike. [1928 Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States, p. 17].

Clearly, these are not the actions of a party whose leaders realized from the outset the need to fight ruthlessly against white chauvinism. The real breakthroughs in the struggle against white chauvinism within the Party would only come about after a break with the rightist revisionist leadership.

### **The Defeat of Lovestone Revisionism**

Under the leadership of the Comintern, a struggle against Lovestone's revisionist line was carried out. In 1928, after receiving a report from cadre of the CPUSA, the Comintern adopted a resolution on the "Negro Question." The 1928 resolution marked a sharp break with the Lovestone position. The resolution noted that "(t)he various forms of oppression of the Negro masses, who are concentrated mainly in the so-called 'Black Belt' provide the necessary conditions for a national revolutionary movement among the Negroes." [1928 Comintern Resolution, p. 14]. It came out firmly against Lovestone's view that the sharecroppers were "reserves of capitalist reaction." The resolution noted the double role of the Negro proletariat as a part of the American proletariat against American imperialism, and as the leader of the movement of the oppressed masses of the Negro population. Further, it called upon the Party to take up systematic work in the South and to rally the white workers to active participation in the struggle.

The resolution was not consistent. It varies on the question of race versus nation, using the formulation "Black Belt" in one section and the less precise "southern states" in another, referring to the national revolutionary movement in one section and then calling for the "right of the Negro race for full emancipation." But, while maintaining that the

central slogan must remain the demand for "full social and political equality for the Negroes" the resolution is "openly and unreservedly for the right of the Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form a majority of the population." Regardless of its inconsistencies, the 1928 resolution contains the elements of a revolutionary position on the Afro-American national question in the demands of the right to self-determination attached to a given territory, the leading role of the Afro-American proletariat in the liberation struggle, and the directive to the Party to carry on systematic work for these revolutionary goals and immediate reforms, organized on the basis of internationalism.

In addition to adopting this resolution, the Comintern set up a committee to further examine the question of the oppression of Negroes in America and Africa.

In 1929, as part of the struggle against the rightist deviation in the Party, Jay Lovestone and other revisionist leaders were expelled from the Party. This marked a temporary victory for the consistent revolutionary forces.

The Seventh National Convention of the CPUSA, March 31-April 14, 1930, reflected the gains made in this struggle against rightist deviations. A thesis and series of resolutions were adopted which brought the Party program much more in line with the Comintern on all questions. The section dealing with the work of the CPUSA in the South was clearly modeled on the *1928 Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States*.

While raising the slogan of full social, economic and political equality for Negroes as the Party's "central demand," Point 16 raises the slogan of self-determination, including the right of secession with the qualification that it must not supersede the preceding slogan, nor degenerate into a call for segregation. [*Thesis and Resolutions for the Seventh National Convention of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.*, p. 61].

The resolution contained criticisms of the Party's failure to develop work in the South, its failure to carry out a resolute and persistent struggle against white chauvinism and contained a plan for setting the work on a sound footing. The resolution also raised demands to disarm the fascist bands (i.e., KKK) and for the right of workers to form armed self-defense groups.

In October, 1930, the Comintern adopted another resolution on the Negro question in the United States. This resolution recognized that the stand of the CPUSA was still one of confusion, which downplayed the demand for self-determination to merely an educational slogan, not to be raised above the demand for equality, etc. The CPUSA still vacillated on the central question of whether the Negroes in the United States in the Black Belt South indeed constituted an oppressed nation with the right to political secession.

The Comintern's resolution stated unequivocally that the Negroes in the U.S. do constitute a nation with the right to political secession. Further, the resolution summarized the general features of the "Negro Nation" centered in the Black Belt

territory, and suffering under the burden of both economic and social remnants of slavery. While retaining the slogan of equality of rights, the resolution points out that: "The slogan of the right to self-determination occupies the central place in the liberation struggle of the Negro population in the Black Belt against the yoke of American imperialism." The resolution then goes on to raise the demands "Confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers" and "Establishment of the state unity of the Black Belt." The resolution clearly lays out the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist line on how this struggle should be carried out, including the necessity for white communists to play a leading role in the struggle against white chauvinism; for the leading role of the Negro proletariat in the struggle for national liberation; the necessity for Negroes and whites to be organized into the same organizations, especially the trade unions; the necessity to carry out correct tactics in gaining proletarian hegemony over the national liberation movement. The resolution emphasizes the necessity for the Negro communists to criticize the half-heartedness of the national revolutionaries and to combat the "nationalist mood" among the masses. The resolution clearly states that the recognition of the right to self-determination is not the same as a call for separation, but the very struggle for the right to freely decide the question is a real slogan of national rebellion against the power of the American imperialists. Quoting Lenin, the Comintern states:

We demand freedom of separation, real right to self-determination... certainly not in order to 'recommend' separation, but on the contrary, in order to facilitate and accelerate the democratic rapprochement and unification of nations. [*1930 Comintern Resolution*, p. 35].

Before proceeding to a discussion of how the CPUSA implemented this resolution, we would like to speak briefly to the revisionists and anti-Stalinists who try to portray the 1930 Resolution as a deviation by Stalin and the Comintern from Lenin's view on the status of Negroes in the U.S. In Lenin's 1916 work on the capitalist development of agriculture, he gives an analysis of the peculiar conditions of the Negroes in the southern U.S. and develops the concept that the Negroes are subjected to semi-feudal or semi-slave conditions: "...the economic survivals of **slavery** are not in any way distinguishable from those of feudalism..." [*LCW*, Vol. 22, p. 24].

Further, he states that the economic basis for the American bourgeoisie's most shameful and despicable oppression of the Negroes is the "...**labour-service system**, which is known as **share-cropping**... They are chiefly semi-feudal, or what is the same in economic terms – semi-slave **share-croppers**." [*LCW*, Vol. 22, p. 25].

In another article of 1917, Lenin states:

In the United States, the Negroes (and also the Mulattos and Indians) account for only 11.1%. They should be classified as an **oppressed nation**, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-65 and guaranteed by the constitution of the republic was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the **chief Negro areas (the South)** in connection with the

transition from the progressive, pre-monopoly capitalism to the reactionary monopoly capitalism (imperialism) of the new era... [LCW, Vol. 23, pp. 275-76; emphasis added].

And again in 1920, when he was preparing the *Preliminary Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Question* for the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin calls for, among other things, additional information and amendments on the Negroes in America, and in the body of the thesis refers to the Negroes in the United States as a dependent and underprivileged **nation**. [LCW, Vol. 31, p. 148]. Clearly then, the theoretical view that the Negro people in the U.S., in fact, constituted an oppressed nation preceded the formation of the CPUSA and was in no way a departure from Lenin's views on the question.

Obviously, the grip of revisionism on the early CPUSA was very strong for it took nearly a decade of struggle to defeat the chauvinist Lovestone view of Negro oppression.

### **1930-35: A Period of Revolutionary Activity**

The combination of the economic crisis and its accompanying social upheaval, and the guidance of a revolutionary line on the Afro-American question, made a qualitative difference in the work of the Party. Although there were shortcomings, the overall character of the CPUSA's activity in this period was that of a revolutionary party. The revisionist views and tendencies of leaders such as Browder were temporarily outweighed by the pressure from the Comintern and the international proletariat.

In 1930, the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR) was founded and in 1931, the Sharecroppers Union was formed in Alabama. Also in 1931, the CPUSA began the campaign to free the Scottsboro defendants, nine Afro-American youths who had been framed and sentenced to death in the northern Alabama town of Scottsboro. The Party energetically took up the defense, combining mass mobilization and political exposure with an energetic courtroom defense.

The Party was able to mobilize large numbers of workers, both Afro-American and white, in defense of these young men. The death sentences were overturned, but the struggle for the freedom of all of the defendants continued for nearly 20 years. While not totally successful in the immediate demand for freedom of the frame-up victims, the campaign rallied people to the cause of Afro-American liberation.

In an article, *The Scottsboro Struggle*, appearing in the *Communist*, May, 1933, James Allen reports on the Party's work on the case. According to Allen's report, the Party was following a basically correct line in the defense, using the case to expose the oppressive nature of the courts, the sham quality of American democracy and the terrible oppression suffered by Afro-Americans. The Party raised the case as part of the overall struggle against the "entire system of national oppression," exposed the half-heartedness of reformist leaders such as the NAACP and strove for proletarian leadership of the movement against these "legal lynchings." Demands for Afro-Americans on the jury and

enforcement of the constitutional rights of Afro-Americans were also main points of the agitation.

Allen's report does not indicate that the demand for the right to self-determination, including the right of political secession, was raised as the central slogan for Afro-American liberation. However, in 1933, the program of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, entitled *Equality, Land and Freedom*, proudly proclaimed:

The League of Struggle for Negro Rights stands for the complete right of self-determination for the Negro people in the Black Belt with full rights for the toiling white minority... the right of self-determination means that the Negro people in the Black Belt have the right to choose freely for or against complete separation from the Federal government, no matter what its form, in existence at that time in the United States.

In districts such as Harlem, where the organizing around the Scottsboro case was closely tied to building the LSNR, the slogan for self-determination was vigorously raised.

The Party also carried out a campaign against white chauvinism within the Party. The most well-known example of this was the public "trial" of a Party member who had objected to the integration of a Party club. The "trial" was held in Harlem, white chauvinism was condemned and the comrade in question was expelled.

Much of the work in the rural South was centered around the Sharecroppers Union, which launched a militant campaign against the brutal exploitation of the sharecroppers. In the struggle at Camp Hill, Alabama in 1932, the sharecroppers were attacked by the landowners and defended their meeting. Several people were killed. Several Union members were charged. The campaign around the sharecroppers' defense also attracted many workers to the Party.

During this Period, thousands of Afro-Americans joined the Party. Tens of thousands more followed its leadership. The Party's activities gained it the reputation for being the "Party of the Negro People."

The Party produced propaganda and agitation around the slogan of "Self-Determination for the Negro Nation." Among these are the articles, books and pamphlets by James Allen and Harry Haywood. In their writings, such as Allen's *Negro Liberation* and Haywood's pamphlet against lynching, they elaborated the Party's position on the "Negro National Question" in a readable and popular style. In *Negro Liberation*, Allen explains in a popular manner how the Negro Nation developed and how it fulfills each of Stalin's criteria for a nation. Allen also notes Stalin's definition of a nation and says that all the characteristics must be present.

A nation is an historically developed community of people; this community of people cannot be temporary, but must be lasting; the people in this common territory must have a common language, they must live

together on a common territory and have a common economic life. The conditions of their life and work in common create more or less uniform ideas, customs, and institutions which are manifested in a common culture. [Allen, *Negro Liberation*, p. 4].

He points out that the common language, English, the common territory in the Black Belt region of the South, and the common culture existed in more or less developed form even before the Civil War and the end of slavery. He describes briefly the further development of the Negro people into a nation during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. In regard to the development of a common economic life, Allen describes both the development of class differentiation among the Negro people, and the semi-slave sharecropping system which tied the Afro-American peasant to the land. But the presentation on common economic life is not clear or consistent.

Allen also outlines a generally correct tactical line on the question of how to achieve Afro-American liberation.

One theoretical error in the Communist Party presentation of the national question appears in James Allen's 1936 book, *The Negro Question in the United States*. In dealing with the impact and implications of the migration of Afro-Americans out of the Black Belt and into the industrial areas of the North, Allen takes a one-sided, undialectical view. In attempting to refute critics who saw the migration as the solution to the national oppression, or as marking the "end" of the nation, Allen stated, "The factors giving rise to the mass migration were only transitory and not a permanent feature of capitalism in the United States." [Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, p. 137].

This statement disregards the dual effect that capitalism has on nations. According to Lenin:

Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. First: the awakening of national life and national movements, struggle against all national oppression, creation of national states. Second: development and acceleration of all kinds of intercourse between nations, breakdown of national barriers, creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

**Both tendencies are a world-wide law of capitalism.** [LCW, Vol. 17, pp. 139-40].

Allen's statements gave encouragement to later revisionists when he concluded:

It is apparent that the factors which tended to deplete the Negro population of the Black Belt were effective only temporarily... if this were the actual tendency [the rapid disintegration of the area of Negro majority] it would amount to nothing more nor less than that capitalism could solve within its own confines and in a gradual manner, without the discomforts of an

agrarian mass upheaval on the plantations, those very problems which the Civil War of 1861-65 had left unsettled. For the persistence of the Negro majority means the persistence of the plantation economy, of which it is a result. The area of continuous Negro majority has only been slightly altered, indicating that those factors which have in the past confined a large portion of the Negro people to the territorial limits set by the slave regime still persist. [Allen, *Negro Question in the U.S.*, pp. 30-31].

There are several incorrect conclusions implied by this statement: that an area of continuous majority of Afro-Americans and the continued existence of the "plantation economy" are necessary conditions for the existence of the Afro-American Nation; and that Afro-Americans remain in the Black Belt and its border areas primarily because of force or coercion.

Contrary to Allen's view, of course, the migration of Afro-Americans out of the Black Belt area continued and reached even higher levels during World War II. Consequently, the area of Afro-American majority has been reduced and a large percentage of Afro-Americans live outside the South. The system of "semi-slave" sharecropping has largely been replaced by "modern" capitalist agriculture, and the majority of Afro-Americans are now proletarians or semi-proletarians rather than sharecroppers.

Following Allen's reasoning, various revisionists have pounced on these facts and concluded that there is no longer an Afro-American Nation. But as we have already pointed out, the transformation of the oppressed people from peasants to proletarians and semi-proletarians does not mean that the nation ceases to exist. Nor, in this case, does it mean that the "peasant" question has been completely resolved, since a large portion of the Afro-American semi-proletarians and agricultural laborers still yearn for the land which has forcibly been taken from them. Neither does the forced migration of a large section of the population out of its homeland mean that the nation has disappeared. For example, both Ireland and Puerto Rico have lost nearly a third of their populations due to forced emigration. But both nations still persist and continue to fight against imperialist domination.

In regard to the question of a majority, Stalin did not speak of a majority population in a given territory as a **condition** for the existence of a nation, but rather of a **stable community** of people sharing a common territory, and of a people residing in "compact masses." In its 1928 *Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies*, the Comintern stated, "In those regions of the South in which compact Negro masses are living, it is essential to put forward the slogan of the 'Right of Self-Determination for Negroes!'" [*Comintern and National Colonial Questions*, p. 117].

This description, of a stable community of people with a common territory and living in compact masses, certainly applies to the Black Belt and its bordering areas today. Based on bourgeois statistics which tend to undercount Afro-Americans, there still remains a substantial area of Afro-American majority in the Black Belt. The areas occupied by Afro-Americans tend to be compact and stable since the 1800's, shifting slightly toward

the urban centers which border the Black Belt. While the percentage of Afro-Americans has dropped, the actual number in the Black Belt and its border areas has increased to approximately 9 ½ million, according to the 1980 Census, as compared with 7 million in 1930. [See the article in this issue, *Has the Afro-American Nation 'Disappeared'?*].

The question of whether or not there is an Afro-American majority in the areas of state unity is important, though not in determining if there is a nation or not. It becomes important in guaranteeing self-rule for the Afro-American people. Since any democratic government would guarantee political rights to all but the former oppressors and their flunkies, a majority of southern Anglo-Americans would mean the continued rule of the Afro-Americans by a state apparatus controlled by another nation. The precise boundaries will be for the local populations to determine in reorganizing the state apparatus. However, it is not complicated to shift the boundaries to include the urban centers bordering the Black Belt where Afro-Americans are a majority or near majority.

Furthermore, many Afro-Americans living in other regions of the U.S. view the South, and in particular the Black Belt area, as their homeland. If the political and economic conditions which forced their emigration were changed, many Afro-Americans would return to the South. The common culture, national identity, and recognition of the South as home is a strong force tying many Afro-Americans to the Black Belt, not just a continuation of the "plantation economy" noted by James Allen.

There have been extreme cases when the numbers of the population of an oppressed people are so reduced that they no longer constitute a nation, but even these oppressed peoples are guaranteed some form of political autonomy under a genuine socialist state. But the millions of Afro-Americans occupying the Black Belt and its bordering areas are a far cry from this decimated state.

### **1935-1944: Reemergence of Revisionism and the Liquidation of a Revolutionary Line on the Afro-American National Question**

The revisionist clique within the CPUSA leadership, led by Earl Browder, had been somewhat dormant. But they seized upon the Comintern's new line, developed at the Seventh Congress in 1935, as a pretext to reassert their rightist views. The Communist International's correct position on the development of a united front against war and fascism was used by Browder to promote total class collaboration and unity with the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie. During this period, Browder raised his rotten slogan, "Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism." His "leadership" led to the actual liquidation of the CPUSA in 1944.

On the Afro-American national question, the Party dropped agitation around the slogan of self-determination. Browder argued that the Negroes had exercised their right to self-determination by not seceding after the Civil War. This totally ignored one major fact: the Negro people of the Black Belt were prevented from developing their own independent state power or deciding their relation to the U.S. government by a violent



counterrevolution which restored the political power of the former slaveowners in alliance with U.S. monopoly capital.

The dropping of the demand for the right to self-determination was part of an overall rightist attack. This is amply illustrated in the collection of articles and speeches, *The Negro and the Democratic Front*, by James Ford. It spans the period 1935-1938. Ford was a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA and various other leading bodies. He was the CP's vice-presidential candidate in 1932 and 1936. In these articles, he criticized earlier Party organizations for raising the correct demands of the Comintern Resolutions. Regarding the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, Ford stated:

The program called for the destruction of the plantation system in the South, for confiscation without compensation of the land of the big landlords, and declared for the complete right of self-determination for the Negro people in the Black Belt of the South. Such a program prevented the development of a broad movement. [Ford, *The Negro and the Democratic Front*, p. 82].

In 1935, Ford "redefined" self-determination: "The right of self-determination, national equality – that is, to hold public offices, to advance national culture and integrate it with American culture as a whole, and also complete uprooting of economic hindrances – can be realized by the Negro people in the Black Belt. [*Ibid.*, p. 28].

In contrast to the Party's aim of exposing the treachery of the NAACP and similar national reformist groups and leaders, Ford praised them to the skies and cited them as genuine voices of the Negro people. Instead of a correct Marxist-Leninist stand of struggle against nationalist ideology, he stated, "We have to stop using the word nationalist too loosely and in a derogatory manner." [*Ibid.*, p. 34].

In regard to Garveyism, Haywood had said in 1933, "Under phrases of Negro liberation, freedom of Africa, the inevitable trend of these movements is to an active alliance with the most reactionary imperialist groups against the national liberation movement of the Negro people, both in Africa and in America." In contrast, Ford said, "...we should approach... the Garveyites in a friendly manner," making no distinctions between the leadership and the masses, taking no note of ideological differences.

In the Party's revolutionary period, Haywood commented on a liberal "anti-lynching bill" proposed by the NAACP:

...the sinister and reactionary purposes of this bill... is most clearly revealed in its definition of a 'mob.' A 'mob' is defined as 'three or more people acting in concert without authority of the law for the purpose of depriving any person of his life or doing him physical injury.'... The law would legalize the shooting down of Negro, white toilers, as at Camptown... [Haywood, *The Road to Negro Liberation*, p. 9-10].

Ford, on the other hand, gave full and uncritical support to the NAACP anti-lynching bill.

Examples of heroic leadership of the struggle for democratic rights, etc. are replaced in Ford's presentations with disgusting glorifications of such vacillators, pacifists, and reactionary "heroes" of philistinism as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. DuBois. There have been revolutionary bourgeois democrats (Thaddeus Stevens, John Brown, Henry Garnet, etc.) who could have been named if one did not want to solely promote proletarian leaders, but the CPUSA now chose to promote only reformists (old and new) at the head of the Afro-American people's movement.

The revolutionary positions of the Party were being throttled at the hands of Earl Browder, James Ford, and others. Browder's all-round rightist views were carried to their logical conclusion when, in 1944, the National Committee voted to liquidate the CPUSA as a communist party.



Leaders of the Communist Party USA betrayed the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism and renounced the party's stand on the right of the Afro-American nation to political secession.

Party leadership, 1948.

### **Reconstruction of the Party on a Revisionist Foundation, 1945**

In 1945, the CPUSA was reconstituted under the leadership of William Z. Foster, but it was never again a genuinely revolutionary party. The reconstituted Party recognized the right to self-determination for the Negro Nation, but this was nothing but an empty shell. The revisionist nature of this position can be seen from several angles.

In the resolution *On the Question of Negro Rights and Self-Determination*, adopted at the plenary meeting of the National Committee of the CPUSA, December 3-5, 1946, the revolutionary content has been carefully removed, leaving only a trace of its outlines. This resolution characterizes the situation thusly: "[The Negroes'] fight for liberation from oppression in the Black Belt is a struggle for full nationhood, for their rightful position of full equality as nation." [*The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, 1947].

That doesn't sound too bad. But what of the fundamental demands for state unity, confiscation of the landed estates, the right to secede and the right of self-rule? The CP said, "...the struggle for Negro liberation is concerned with gaining equal rights... in the South the struggle for attaining representative government and land reform." [*Ibid.*, p. 11].

And what of the Leninist meaning of the slogan of self-determination, that is, the right to secession, the right to form a separate state? The CPUSA now said that this is the

right to realize self-government in the Negro majority area in the South [with no mention of a revolution]. Only on this basis will the relation of the Negro people to the State and Federal governments be determined on the basis of freedom. [*Ibid.*, p. 12].

But what does this rather vague formulation mean – what form would this self-government take? "The Communist Party does not attempt to impose any specific solution in advance of the form in which the right of self-determination will be exercised." [*Ibid.*]. This little gem does away with the Comintern's call for state unity and the right to secession. The "self-government" of the CPUSA could mean as little as a few Afro-American city councilmen, or perhaps an Afro-American mayor in an all-Afro-American town.

And how would this "self-determination" be brought about? How will this vague self-government and land reform be attained? Apparently, a "firm alliance of labor and the progressive forces... will wrest concessions from... Congress... Such a democratic coalition can rally all progressives and independent political forces in the country to defeat reaction in 1948." [*Ibid.*, p. 10].

So there we have it. The Communist International's program for a national rebellion against the oppressing powers and for an agrarian revolution to give land to the toilers had been transformed into a mealy-mouthed piece of trash which reduced the struggle for self-determination to begging for parliamentary reforms.

In the 1950's the CPUSA held a series of theoretical discussions on the Negro national question. The result of these discussions was not a rectification of the line on the question, but rather a theoretical justification for further revisionism on the road to complete liquidation. In his 1954 book, *Negro People in American History*, William Z. Foster, then National Chairman of the CPUSA, used the formulation "a nation within a nation," which was a prelude to the dissolution of the idea of the Afro-American Nation altogether. In this presentation, Foster still gives lip service to self-determination and even to the "possibility of secession," but his qualifications and his continual stress on difficulties make his argument an echo of the old "practicality" argument which Lenin so vehemently attacked. Foster said: "Theoretically, it is possible for the Negro people to win national liberation including the right of self-determination and secession, within the framework of the American capitalist system. [Foster, *Negro People in American History*, p. 555].

But Foster also raised certain "peculiarities" of the Negro nation:

...the Negro people are situated in the midst of the oppressor nation, not thousands of miles away, as is often the case...

...this oppressor nation, which has extensive democratic traditions, is the most powerful capitalist state in the world...

The American Negro people are faced by very powerful oppressors.... They have to fight stubbornly and with all possible aid to win even the most elementary human rights.... Hence, it requires but little imagination to conceive the stubborn resistance they will encounter, and their urgent need for allies... [*Ibid.*].

The rest of the chapter stressed the desperate need of the Negro people for white allies. This type of obstacle mongering is thinly veiled counterrevolutionary junk.

When one calls for a national rebellion to wrest state power from the hands of one class and put it firmly in the hands of another class, it is obvious that there will be "stubborn" resistance. But the potential of the Afro-American liberation movement is not some feeble thing that must rely solely on outside help or on the sympathies and "democratic traditions" of the oppressor nation. Rather, it is a mighty force in its own right for weakening the power of the U.S. imperialists. It has an ally in the international proletarian revolution and other national revolutionary movements against imperialism.

In his next section on self-determination, Foster sank to the lowest reformism and raised the possibility that "...political proportional representation for the Negroes... may develop into forms of self-determination." [*Ibid.*, p. 559]. The revolutionary heart of the slogan has been removed and nothing of any value is left. In Foster's view, the Negro people are left to joining the "...powerful democratic coalition movement..." and "vigorously insisting" upon proportional representation. Here is the current CPUSA reformist, anti-monopoly line, sketched out in 1954. It was no accident that the same year this book appeared in print, the CPUSA shelved what was left of its revolutionary line on the Negro national question.

In 1956, the Party once again adopted an openly liquidationist line:

A realistic perspective has opened up for a peaceful and democratic achievement of the full social, political and economic equality of the Negro people within the framework of our specific American system... the slogan of self-determination should be abandoned... [as quoted by Haywood, *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question*, p. 3].

This was based on the old Lovestone theory concerning the mechanization of Southern agriculture and the out-migration of Afro-Americans. Lovestoneite and Browderite revisionism had once again been resurrected.

Today, the CPUSA holds to the 1956 position but with a few opportunist concessions to the Afro-American bourgeois national reformists. This "new" position has a few embellishments, but amounts to a liquidation of the national revolutionary struggle. According to the *New Program of the Communist Party USA*, May 1970,

The call for 'Black Liberation' reaffirms the historical goal of full and unconditional economic, political and social equality for Afro-Americans. More, it calls for recognition by white allies that full freedom can be established **only on such terms as seem proper to the Black people themselves**. The Black liberation movement is at the very heart of the struggle against U.S. imperialism, for the full freedom of all working people. [*New Program of the CPUSA*, p. 54].

The addition of the clause, "only on such terms, etc." in practice means that the CPUSA does not criticize the leadership of the national reformists, nor do they make clear the ideological incompatibility of nationalism and internationalism. The call for unity of all classes of Black people [*Ibid.*, p. 59] again means subordination to bourgeois reformism.

This program speaks of "political power" meaning only "proportional representation," within the confines of the U.S. imperialist state:

...what is needed is to unite communities, to guarantee that Black people will be represented at least in proportion to their numbers. It can provide an effective way for Black people to determine who represents them and to exercise some control over their elected representatives.

...Black political control (in the South) assumes special importance... it could lead to the completion of the attainment of the bourgeois-democratic rights in the South, which had been cut short by the betrayal of Reconstruction in 1876. [*Ibid.*].

There is no revolutionary content to this program. What the CPUSA advocates and organizes is a reform movement, tailing behind the bourgeois national reformists.

Furthermore, it panders to and encourages nationalism among the oppressed people by encouraging separate organizations among the workers based on nationality, and it capitulates to cultural nationalists with its calls for "community control." In particular, the CPUSA advocates separate, all-Black organizations within the trade unions – just the opposite of the internationalist position on this question.

### **Effects of CPUSA'S Revisionism on the Afro-American National Question**

The objective effect of the degeneration of the CPUSA on the movement for liberation of the Afro-American people was to strengthen bourgeois nationalism among the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations. The Anglo-American workers, deprived of firm revolutionary, internationalist leadership more easily fell prey to the white supremacist ideas which are constantly promoted by the imperialist bourgeoisie. For the workers and petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, the only leadership which opposed their continued oppression was bourgeois nationalism. The CPUSA, insofar as it continued to work in the sphere of the Afro-American liberation struggle, threw all of its weight behind the national reformists, and joined the liberal chorus in upholding the state

privileges of the Anglo-American nation and denouncing the national revolutionary and proletarian positions on the Afro-American national question. Had there been a revolutionary proletarian party based in the South after World War II, the whole course of the national revolutionary movement and the proletarian revolution would have been altered.

A revival in the study of Marxism-Leninism, the national rebellions of the 1960's, and the anti-war movement were all factors in building a new revolutionary current in the U.S. One of the most significant developments was the formation of the Continuations Committee in 1974. As part of the general rejection of the revisionism of the CPUSA, the Continuations Committee was one of the first groups to reprint, popularize and adopt the Comintern line on a number of questions. Among them was the Comintern resolution on the Negro national question. The Continuations Committee gave rise to the Communist Labor Party (CLP), which for a while upheld the Afro-American thesis, but soon departed from the slogan of the right to political secession for the Afro-American Nation. This coincided with the CLP's desertion of Marxism-Leninism on a whole series of questions, even adopting the thesis that the USSR was in 1974 a socialist country, not a revisionist state. Today, the CLP upholds the same program as the CPUSA did in 1970, agitating for political reforms in the Black Belt as a substitute for a national rebellion that would bring to power an Afro-American government of a revolutionary democratic and/or proletarian character. The CLP is pushing for the election of Afro-Americans to local offices with U.S. imperialist rule intact, and is trying to pawn this off as self-determination and independence.

We want to examine briefly the deviations of several other groups which have developed positions on the Afro-American national question: the October League/Communist Party Marxist-Leninist; the Workers' Viewpoint/Communist Workers' Party; the Revolutionary Union/Revolutionary Communist Party; the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee/Communist Party USA (Marxist-Leninist); and *The Guardian/Line of March*. We have chosen these four because they illustrate different deviations on the question which are typical of other revisionists today. All of these have their prototypes in the deviations of the CPUSA, and all of them capitulate to the chauvinism and ideology of the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie.

In its 1976 *Resolution of the Third Congress*, the October League formally recognized the right to self-determination, including the right to political secession. It then proceeded to hedge this recognition round with qualifications a la William Z. Foster, to the point that it was stripped of any meaning.

The Comintern resolution clearly states:

As long as capitalism rules in the United States the Communists cannot come out against governmental separation of the Negro zone from the United States. They recognise that this separation from the Imperialist United States would be preferable from the standpoint of the national interests of the Negro population, to their present oppressed state, and

therefore, the Communists are ready at any time to offer all their support if only the working masses of the Negro population are ready to take up the struggle for governmental independence of the Black Belt. [1930 *Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the U.S.*, p. 33].

Despite its claim to uphold the Comintern resolution, the OL came out against secession "at this time" and by implication, at any other time. It reduced the question to

[t]he fact that the majority of Black people are working side by side with their brothers and sisters, whites and other oppressed minorities, lays the basis for a united assault on the imperialists. Our strategic outlook calls for a socialist revolution, based on proletarian internationalism, which will accomplish in one sweep the basic conditions for the emancipation of the working class and the liberation of Black people. [*Resolution of the Third Congress of the October League*, p. 37].

The OL then "warned" that the struggle for the right to self-determination should not be put off until socialism; rather, it equated the struggle for immediate reforms with the struggle for self-determination. The OL reduced self-determination to the cumulative effect of small reforms: "Self-determination is the highest form of democratic rights and every victory in the democratic struggle is a step towards the realization of self-determination for the Afro-American nation." [*Ibid.*, p. 38]. Again, the OL chose to ignore the meaning of the slogans raised by the Comintern – slogans of national rebellion against the ruling class, while the OL's slogans were mere reformism. These same deviations carried over to the CPML and were obvious in its practice. The CPML followed the same chauvinist attitudes of the modern day CPUSA, seeing the main task as "leading the Afro-American masses" in the struggle for reforms, while tailing behind the worst reformists, like the SCLC.

The deviation of the Communist Workers Party U.S.A. is quite similar to the now defunct Communist Party Marxist-Leninist. In its 1979 presentation, *On the Origin of the Afro-American Nation*, the CWP defends the existence of the Afro-American Nation. It expounds on the armed struggle for national liberation during Reconstruction and the crushing reactionary terror which followed the defeat of Reconstruction. In conclusion, the CWP states, "The Post-Reconstruction era left only one alternative for the Afro-American people – to continue their heroic revolutionary struggle for equal rights and the right of self-determination." [*On the Origin of the Afro-American Nation*, p. 9]. But then the CWP counterposes the national liberation struggle with the socialist revolution, and thereby liquidates altogether the revolutionary struggle for the right to secession in the Black Belt. According to the CWP, "Workers rule is the only basis to begin to thoroughly resolve national oppression in the United States" [*Ibid.*]. And with this pronouncement, it calmly tables the demand for the right of secession of the Afro-American Nation and thereby instructs the oppressed Afro-American people to bear the outrageous yoke of national oppression until the socialist revolution. This bit of chauvinist advice was given to the Algerian people by the revisionist French Communist Party during the Algerians' struggle against French imperialism, from the 1950's through to liberation. Waiting for

the socialist revolution to liberate the oppressed peoples is in sharp contradiction with Marxism-Leninism in the present era of world revolution. As Lenin and Stalin taught, it is impossible to tell beforehand what the relationship will be between the anti-imperialist national liberation struggles and the socialist revolutionary struggles in the oppressor nation. Whether the former will precede the latter or vice versa, or whether the national liberation movement and the socialist revolution will proceed simultaneously is impossible to tell beforehand. What is important is that the oppressed people must not wait – they must fight for their freedom now, regardless of the degree to which the socialist revolution has matured in the oppressor nation.

Another of the "anti-revisionist" groups which adopted the Comintern resolutions as the basis of its position on the Afro-American national question was the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee (MLOC). The MLOC adopted this correct position and took positive steps toward popularizing the slogan of the right of self-determination and building organizations in the Black Belt South. However, opportunist leadership tried to reduce the slogan to an empty phrase. In fact, this became one of the central issues over which the CPUSA/ML (MLOC) split. The sabotage of this line took many forms. In the agitation and propaganda, the editorial policy was to reject the demand for state unity on the grounds that it was identical with the slogan of secession. The struggle came out into the open over the assessment of Martin Luther King and his contributions – the opportunists glorifying him as a revolutionary, while the correct assessment that King was a national reformist who at a certain point openly joined the imperialists and reactionaries against the national liberation movement, was adopted only after a struggle. In general, the clique of revisionist leaders took the position that the SCLC, Jesse Jackson, and other bourgeois reformists represented a revolutionary "national bourgeoisie," which should be united with and be part of the revolutionary united front. These views were formally defeated in the organization, but the opportunist clique continued to promote them. When the Revolutionary Political Organization Marxist-Leninist split with the reformist clique, we successfully broke with these reactionary, revisionist views on Afro-American liberation.

Thousands more will take the place of those who fall.  
Rally protesting the police murder of Bonita Carter, Birmingham, Alabama, 1979





The Revolutionary Communist Party's (RCP) Anglo-American chauvinism was cloaked behind the elaborate concoction of the "nation of a new type." The RCP stated:

...there are still real links... that continue to unite Black people into a national union, a nation of a new type, under new conditions – a proletarian nation, dispersed throughout the U.S., but at the same time, concentrated within the urban industrial centers. This is reflected in the fact that the national consciousness of Black people – their consciousness as a people with a common culture, a common history of oppression and resistance down to today, and a common national origin in the Black Belt – is higher than it ever has been. At the same time the overwhelming majority of Black people are wageworkers, and their class consciousness is also higher than it ever has been: [*Red Papers* 5, p. 33].

The RCP attempted to justify this clearly Bundist position (the existence of a nation devoid of a common territory) with an incredible amount of contradictory anti-Marxist and pseudo-Marxist junk. It basically dismissed Stalin's polemic against the Russian Bundists, who put forward a similar view, by saying that Black people, wherever they are, constitute a "nation of a new type" because of their "national consciousness" and have no need of a "common territory." This is no different from the formulation of the

Austrian Social Democrat, O. Bauer, that a nation is "a relative community of character" to which Stalin responded,

Bauer's point of view, which identifies a nation with its national character, divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an invisible, self-contained force. The result is not a living and active nation, but something mystical, intangible and supernatural. [Stalin, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, pp. 26-27].

But where is the territory of this nation of a new type? How is this nation of no territory to exercise its right to secede? There is no answer since there is no common territory. This explains why the RCP never called for the right of secession of its "nation of a new type."

In practice, the RCP seldom raised demands of any type in defense of the rights of its new-type nation. Indeed, the treatment of the situation of Afro-Americans in the RCP's presentation differs little from that of the CPUSA, i.e., that Afro-American people suffer from racism and superexploitation.

In one of its last public activities in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, the RCP popped up at some of the protests against the police murder of a young Afro-American woman, Bonita Carter. In one of its typically vulgar and "leftist" leaflets, the RCP summed up its view of the nature of the national oppression of Afro-American people: "We face the brutal misery of the capitalist system in common with a double portion allotted to Blacks." In the next paragraph, it calls for "revolution," but makes no distinction between socialist and national revolution and the necessity for both in order to really free the masses of Afro-Americans. So far as anyone could determine, the RCP carried out no activity among Anglo-Americans to build protest against this outrageous police murder.

This type of "organizing," combined with its overall sectarian, "leftist" line, resulted in the RCP's inability to build any lasting organization in the Birmingham area.

Finally, we will address the "New Lovestoneite" position of *Line of March*. The journal, and the group behind it, have no influence on the working class, but its revisionist material is circulated among some intellectuals who could possibly adopt the proletarian viewpoint if properly trained in real Marxism-Leninism.

The *LOM* position is loaded with pseudo-scientific phrases which tend to obscure its meaning and give the impression of "rendering more profound." However, we will try and address the main deviations from Marxism-Leninism. The **Line of March Critique** is presented in two parts: first, its criticism of the "Black Nation Thesis;" second, the presentation of its "racism" line. We will treat each section separately.

*Line of March* notes two "theoretical errors" of the Black Nation Thesis. *LOM* alleges that applying Stalin's definition for characteristics or criteria to determine whether or not a given grouping constitutes a nation is a metaphysical method. It says that these

characteristics are necessary, but not sufficient. "What is particular to nations is not the four characteristics, but the particular historical practice that produces those features as a unity – the formation of distinct capitalist social formations," is the way the *LOM* puts it. But what does this mean? Is not the development of a common economic life among people with a common language in a given territory, and the consequent development of a common culture the "particular historical practice that produces those features as a unity?" And is not a nation "a distinct capitalist formation?" What, then, have our profound friends added to Stalin's description? Just the proviso that these characteristics are necessary but allegedly **not sufficient**. But does this agree with Stalin's thinking on the subject? No. After discussing these four characteristics of a nation, Stalin says, "We have now exhausted the characteristic features of a nation." The "metaphysical method" seems to be the province of *Line of March*.

*Line of March* charges that

The basic theoretical error of the Black Nation thesis is its transposition of what is really a racial question into a national question.... Indeed, the Black Nation line bows to the prevailing racist logic that Black folks and white folks are so inherently different that they could never be a part of the same nation or nationality regardless of the facts of history.

This is totally false. Clearly, every oppressed nation is distinguished from the oppressor nation by one or more significant features. In some cases, the question of religion comes to the forefront. In other cases, the language of the oppressor and the oppressed is different. Stalin spoke directly to this general point when he said,

...when nations are compared, sometimes one characteristic (national character), sometimes another (language), or sometimes a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. [Stalin, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, p. 26].

In the case of the Afro-American people, one of the main features which distinguishes the members of the oppressor and oppressed nationalities is the physical characteristics based on two distinct racial types. The slaves, who formed the base of the nation, were of African origin. Through, in many cases, the rape of Black women, and in other cases, through intermarriage with Caucasians and Native Americans, there developed a distinctive people who formed the base of the Afro-American Nation. However, what these people have in common is not solely their racial type, but a common experience, a historical development, first under slavery and then the particular conditions of life in the Black Belt characterized by an agrarian economy, sharecropping, Jim Crow segregation and lynch terror. The local whites are not members of the Afro-American Nation; although they live in the Black Belt territory, they have not shared aspects of the common development and therefore lack the common psychology and are thus not a part of the distinct Afro-American nationality. What the bourgeoisie portrays as a racial conflict between Afro-Americans and whites is no more caused by racial differences than the conflict in northern Ireland today is caused by religious differences.

The claim that "membership" in the Afro-American Nation is "assigned" strictly by race is unfounded. Haitians or Jamaicans in the U.S. may be of the same racial type, but they are not part of the Afro-American Nation. They are part of the Haitian and Jamaican national minorities.

*Line of March* asserts that, while the Black Nation thesis may at one point have been the most revolutionary framework for understanding the nature of Afro-American oppression, there never was a nation, and there never was a "Black national territory or economy." In regard to the question of a common economic life, one of Stalin's criteria, *LOM* claims that the Afro-American people in the Black Belt region did not have a common economic life. This claim is justified first of all by distorting the meaning of common economic life and substituting the formulation "distinct common economy."

In answer to these professors, let us go back to the basics. It is a bald-faced lie and distortion of the truth to assert that Lenin and Stalin ever meant "distinct national economy" rather than "common economic life" as an essential feature of a nation. For the sake of the *Line of March* illiterates, let us go back to Stalin's definition of a nation and see what precisely he said.

**"A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, manifested in a common culture."** [Stalin, *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, p. 22]. Stalin further asserted that the common economic life provides economic cohesion to a particular community of people occupying a certain territory, possessing a common language, etc. What the common economic life expresses is an internal economic bond that "welds the various parts of a nation into a single whole," thus the exchange of commodities, especially at the level of capitalist development where labor power itself becomes a commodity, welds together the community of people of a particular territory, language, etc. into a nation. Then Stalin gave a good example of this process of welding that capitalism performed on the Georgian people of the Czarist Russian Empire.

Georgia came on the scene, as a nation only in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of the means of communication and the **rise of capitalism**, introduced the division of labor between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic isolation of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole. [*Ibid.*, p. 21] [Emphasis added].

Note carefully Stalin's observation, "...the growth of the economic life... the rise of capitalism... completely shattered the economic isolation...and bound them together into a single whole." Stalin was making reference to the effect of capitalism upon a particular community of people. Nowhere did he say that this "common economic life" in and of itself introduces the distinction between one nation and another, that the distinction between nations is expressed in their "distinct national economies."

No, the distinction that exists between nations arises from the combination and interaction of all the factors going into the development of a nation – language, territory, common economic life and psychological makeup. When Marxist-Leninists speak of the forging of the Afro-American Nation after Reconstruction in the Black Belt South, we are asserting that the features of common language, territory and psychological make-up have already appeared in the development of the Afro-American people and that the growth of capitalism after the Civil War (which was still retarded by remnants of slavery) welded together and continues to weld the Afro-Americans of the Black Belt into a nation.

From the "distinct national economy," *Line of March* passes over to the totally absurd claim that the Afro-American Nation must possess an independent economy from the Anglo-American Nation in order to satisfy the condition of common economic life.

The surest sign of a distinct economy is the emergence of such 'macroeconomic' phenomena as a distinct monetary and credit system (even if the names of the currency may be the same as that of another nation), a distinct general rate of profit and interest, a developing equity market etc. All nations, even colonized nations, consist of distinct capitalist social formations which exhibit these macroeconomic phenomena. [*Line of March*, Vol. 1, July/Aug., 1981, p. 5]

Again, the authors' attempt to "render more profound" makes it almost impossible to determine what they are trying to say. We feel sorry for them because, as this statement indicates, the tongue of certain intellectuals has lost its "distinct connection" with the brain. Again note that Lenin and Stalin never put forward that a nation must have a "distinct national economy" in order for it to exist as a nation.

In fact, the level of development of capitalism which provides the common economic life of a developing nation is of no real importance or consequence for the existence of the nation since even the lowest stage of capitalism is more than sufficient to "weld peoples into nations." This is seen in the example given by Stalin as regards the region of Georgia. The level of capitalist development in the Georgian territory was very low. Various remnants of feudalism were still present in the economy (serfdom was still dominant in the countryside until the turn of the century). Yet, as Stalin pointed out, the development of the means of communication and the rise of capitalism led to the fusion of the Georgian peoples into a nation. By the rise of capitalism, Lenin and Stalin are only asserting that fundamentally there is commodity production, exchange and the market. Whether or not this market has evolved to its highest stage, state monopoly capitalism, is completely irrelevant.

In fact, *LOM's* claims regarding the distinct general rate of profit and interest and a developing market as a condition for common economic life is complete nonsense. Marxist political economy recognizes that for capitalist countries within the world capitalist system, capital will draw different rates of profit and interest as a consequence of the differing composition of capital, and that as capitalism develops there is a tendency

for an average rate to establish itself for all countries. Similarly, certain capitalist countries and states have evolved to a level such that a certain specialization in trade takes place where a small number of individuals engage in the trading of money, i.e., an equity market. But what has all this got to do with capitalism's role in fusing nations? Nowhere have Marxist-Leninists made these particular features of capitalist economy conditions for the existence of a nation. For example, the Zairian nation of the 1960's could not have become politically independent since it did not possess these "distinct macroeconomic phenomena." At the time of independence, its economy was completely dominated by Belgium and there were only sixteen Zairian college graduates in the entire country to administer the "distinct monetary and. credit system, equity market, etc." Did the Georgian nation which Stalin described have a monetary system that was distinct from that of Czarist Russia? Which of the oppressed nations in the Austrian Empire had a distinct monetary and credit system?

The common economic life of the Afro-Americans could not develop under slavery because, with very few exceptions, Afro-Americans were not allowed to travel freely, communicate freely with each other, engage in trade, or work for wages. After the Civil War, Afro-Americans moved into areas of trade, became farmers, tradesmen, wage workers, etc. The war itself had brought about improved railroad concessions and other communications. Afro-Americans moved into the cities in large numbers; in some cases, all-Afro-American towns were founded, etc. Many of the Afro-Americans learned quickly to read and write and a written culture, newspapers, schools, books, and an intelligentsia developed. The defeat of Reconstruction and the imposition of the segregationist "Jim Crow" laws stopped any tendency toward assimilation into the Anglo-American Nation as a whole, or the possibility of any independent national development among the Afro-Americans. But it did not eliminate this common economic life.

The semi-feudal tenancy and sharecropping system were part of the peculiar "conditions of existence" which served to weld the Afro-Americans into a nation. Again, the argument that white southerners were subjected to the same conditions of life and the same common economy, ignores the fact that they had not been slaves, were not subject to the "Black Codes" and did not share the common psychology manifested in a "common culture."

In regard to the question of the development of class differentiation and a social division of labor among the Afro-Americans, *LOM* again applies its special criteria of "distinct from all others" rather than common to the Afro-Americans. *LOM* admits that there is class differentiation among the Afro-American people, but draws the erroneous conclusion that since an alleged 49.7% of the Black Belt population is made up of "white planters, yeoman farmers, and tenants..." there is no common economic life for the Afro-Americans. *LOM's* reasoning is that since Afro-American proletarians are exploited by the "white" bourgeoisie, and Afro-American sharecroppers and tenants are exploited mainly by "white" landowners, there is no distinct national economy.

Further, it contends that classes must be defined by **their specific relation to one another in the production process**. This is another prop to *LOM's* argument that Afro-Americans have no "distinct" common economy. However, there are many oppressed nations where the majority of the proletariat is exploited by the bourgeoisie of the oppressor nation. In Azania (South Africa), there is no Black bourgeoisie. In Puerto Rico, the majority of the proletarians work for U.S.-owned corporations. On the other hand, *LOM* ignores the development of the Afro-American petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, whose scope is restricted almost exclusively to the Afro-American market. Although these classes are miniscule relative to the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie, their existence demonstrates the development of capitalism and "common economy sufficient to fuse the Afro-American people into a nation."

The *Line of March* argument against the common territory of the Afro-American Nation breaks down into two points. One, allegedly defining the Afro-American Nation on the basis of Black people, the Comintern and the CPUSA were using a racial rather than a national definition, and therefore, the process of picking out that area where the racial grouping constitutes a majority is a totally arbitrary process, not defined by objective criteria. Two, *Line of March* disputes the idea of a "historic homeland" because

first, much of the territory of the Black Belt was not settled until decades after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 made it part of U.S. territory, whereas Blacks were held in slavery in the five Southern east coast colonies since 1619. In fact, the Black Belt contained the majority of Blacks in the U.S. only from about 1860 until 1900, and this majority never exceeded 55.4% of the Black population. Second, Blacks were a 'stable majority' **within** the Black Belt only from about 1860 to 1930, the decline beginning as early as 1880. [*LOM, Critique of the Black Nation Thesis*, p. 47].

The rest of the questions presented by the *Line of March* in regard to the existence or non-existence of a common territory for the Afro-American people depart from Stalin's definition, which is "a historically constituted stable community of people with a common territory," etc. Stalin makes no mention of relative majorities and minorities but rather the stability and commonality of the community and the territory. In the development of multinational states in the latter period of capitalism, all manner of complex intermingling of nationalities and nations occurs.

Further, Lenin noted that in the period of imperialism, besides those forces which tend to consolidate people into nations, there is the tendency by which workers from the oppressed nations are drawn by the demands of capital to the metropolitan nation and industrialized areas.

Capitalism has given rise to a special form of migration of nations. The rapidly developing industrial countries, introducing machinery on a large scale... raise wages at home above the average rate and thus attract workers from the backward countries.

Hundreds of thousands of workers thus wander hundreds and thousands of versts. Advanced capitalism drags them forcibly into its orbit, tears them out of the backwoods in which they live, makes them participants in the world-historical movement and brings them face to face with the powerful, united, international class of factory owners.

America heads the list of countries which import workers. [LCW, Vol. 20, p. 68].

Therefore, the argument that a substantial portion of the Afro-American population no longer resides in the common national territory does not negate the existence of a nation in that territory or have any bearing on the question at all. The fact that large numbers of Afro-Americans left the Black Belt and its border regions to work in industry in the north and west is completely consistent with Lenin's description of the effects of imperialist domination upon an oppressed nation.

The important point in deciding the question of a common territory in regard to the Afro-American people is that millions of Afro-Americans have inhabited and continue to inhabit a more or less continuous area in which they developed a common economic life and a common culture. And, further that many of the Afro-Americans who were forced, either by economic necessity or political terror, to leave this territory still regard it as their homeland.

Millions of Afro-Americans still live in the Black Belt where they have developed a common economic life and culture.



### **Bankruptcy of the "White United Front"**

Despite their elaborately-concocted statistical and pseudo-theoretical arguments, their fundamental position is that racism is the basis of the oppression of Afro-Americans.



Passing over much of their revisionist exposition, we come to the point of their new Lovestoneite theory, that there exists a "white united front" based on the "white racial group."

In these circumstances, there is no more powerful weapon at the command of monopoly capital than the white united front. The basis for this front is for whites, no matter what their class, to act politically on the basis of their common **racial** interest. While this racial interest principally serves the bourgeoisie, since for the ruling class there is no contradiction between its interest in the capital relation and the race relation, it is also a factor that impacts whites in the working class. For to the extent that racism serves to protect whites as whites from an equal share in the general emiseration of the working class, there exists a material basis for significant sectors of the white workers to see their racial interest as principal over their class interest. [*Line of March*, Sept.-Oct. 1981, p. 87].

This "material basis" for a white united front is a pure fiction. Insofar as white workers are workers who produce surplus value which is expropriated by the bourgeoisie, there is no material basis for unity of interests between the workers and the bourgeoisie. Given that the Anglo-American workers constitute an overwhelming majority of the working class in the United States, there cannot be any "general" impoverishment or worsening of conditions for the working class **as a whole** without it affecting the Anglo-American section of the working class. The *Line of March* seeks to elevate the entire Anglo-American section of the working class to the level of the bribed labor aristocracy. The labor aristocracy does receive certain material benefits from the imperialist bourgeoisie and consequently sees its interests as coinciding with the ruling class. There is no evidence to show that the rest of the Anglo-American working class is in a comparable position. Indeed, it appears that *LOM* has manufactured this entire elaborate theoretical fiction in order to justify its fear of the working class and its revolutionary mission. For if the Anglo-American workers have a material interest in uniting with the imperialist bourgeoisie, then the *LOM* folks are not required to make any serious effort to organize a party of working class revolution.

### **The Afro-American Nation Today**

Returning once again to Stalin's definition we find a stable community of people, occupying essentially the same territory from generation to generation, speaking the same language, having a common economic life and a common psychology, manifested in a common culture.

Beyond a doubt, there are still millions of Afro-American people living in the same places that millions of Afro-American people have lived for nearly 200 years, in a crescent shaped area that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the western reaches of the Mississippi delta, and on into Texas, from New Orleans in the South up to Memphis, Tennessee.

These Afro-American people share a common economic life which binds them together. The Marxist meaning of a common economic life is an economy based on the exchange of commodities, a common market which promotes the development of communications, and breaks down the old isolation of the subsistence or feudal economy, a social division of labor based on the development of classes and the development of specialization of various branches of industry. In the Black Belt South we find all of these characteristics developed among the Afro-American people. An economy, still based largely on agriculture, has expanded into the processing and transportation of agricultural and forest products. The crops are more diversified: to the cotton, tobacco, sugar cane and rice of the earlier days have been added soy beans and modern capital-intensive poultry raising. The great pine forests are being harvested as an agricultural crop. As to communications, modern roads and highways cut across the Black Belt from north to south and east to west. Huge semis transport goods across the area. Radio, television, telegraph and telephones connect even the most remote areas.

As to the question of class differentiation, even in the Black Belt areas there has been a growth of class division among the Afro-American people. In the cities of the Black Belt the petty bourgeoisie, based on doctors, lawyers, school teachers, etc. has grown. The proletariat is no longer confined to the border areas: Firestone tire plants in Albany, Georgia; Masonite and chicken processing plants in Laurel, Mississippi; chemicals and other industries on the lower Mississippi delta are just a few of the industries that have been developed in the Black Belt in order to exploit the labor of the Afro-Americans who have been driven from the land. This has led to a tremendous growth of the Afro-American proletariat in the Black Belt itself.

It is true that the system of sharecropping and the domination of cotton has been reduced to a tiny fraction of its former scope. Despite the reduced demands for agricultural labor, about one-third of the Afro-Americans in the South live in rural areas. One would have to look hard to see a mule – huge tractors have taken their place. The former sharecroppers and their sons and daughters now drive these tractors, often as hired hands, or work as wage laborers in various agriculture related industries. They are still exploited by the same landowners and monopoly capitalists.

The forms of national oppression may have altered. There are only a few sharecroppers left, mainly in the Mississippi Delta and the Carolinas where tobacco still requires much hard labor, but a new type of debt peonage holds many Afro-Americans in its clutches. The same white landlord still owns the agricultural land and the factories involved in processing agricultural products; "the man" still owns the local stores and controls credit at the local bank. Often a landowner will allow a family to live in one of the cropper shacks for "free" if the children will "help out" at harvest and other peak labor times. Jimmy Carter is one of these landlords, with land and a peanut processing operation and strong ties to U.S. imperialist capital. The pulpwood cutters are still in the position of debt peonage to the monopoly capitalist paper companies.

The degree of political oppression in the Black Belt is severe. Political terror, carried out both by the police, sheriffs and "extra-legal" fascist gangs such as the Ku Klux Klan is

the rule rather than the exception. In the 1977 case of five young Afro-Americans framed on murder charges in Dawson, Georgia, a former member of the sheriff's department described some of the methods used to terrorize the Afro-American population. He talked about the beatings and mistreatment of Afro-American prisoners, of the police riding through Afro-American neighborhoods poisoning dogs in order to harass the people. He told how the mayor came and got the machine gun from the National Guard armory to "take care of" an Afro-American citizen who had displeased him.

In 1980, in Tupelo, Mississippi, armed Klansmen tried to terrorize the people. In the course of the demonstrations, the Klan revealed what people already knew, that many of the police were in the Klan, and that the police organize the Klan.

Armed Anglo-American police or sheriffs stand at many polling places in the Black Belt on voting days "encouraging" Afro-Americans not to vote. Sometimes they stand outside the polling places and arrest any Afro-Americans who have outstanding parking tickets, etc. The case in Pickens County, Alabama in which Julia Wilder and Maggie Bozeman were railroaded into jail for registering absentee voters, is instructive. As long as the women kept supporting the candidates of the landowners' choice, they were "ok," but when they supported an Afro-American candidate they were persecuted and jailed.

As a consequence, there are still very few Afro-American elected officials in the Black Belt areas. And the few who are elected in spite of the fact that they are merely liberal reformists, are attacked by the reactionaries, and as in the case of Eddie Carthan in Tchula, Mississippi, they are framed and removed from office.

In one small Alabama town, the Afro-American majority managed to elect Afro-American representatives to the town council. In retaliation, the out-going councilmen returned the ownership of all the roads and rights of way to the private landowners, thereby crippling the town government.

These are only a few examples of the continued denial of political rights which the Afro-American people suffer because they are an oppressed nation, subject to the political rule of the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie.

And still, despite the continued persecution, Afro-Americans view the South as their "homeland." In 1973, at least one-third of the Afro-Americans living in other parts of the U.S. were originally from the South. And as the economic crisis in the industrial areas continues to deepen, the out-migration of Afro-Americans has reversed – there are now more returning to the South than leaving it. Many of those returning are settling in Birmingham and Atlanta, cities which border the Black Belt, while others are moving back to areas in the Black Belt.

Even among those Afro-Americans who do not move back to the South, there are definite cultural institutions which reflect and keep alive the "down home" feeling towards the Black Belt. Homecomings and footwashings in the rural areas are gatherings of Afro-American people from the cities such as Birmingham and from other parts of the country

where the people come "home" for a few days of good food, good music and good company. Family reunions are a custom in the Black Belt area and bordering region; Afro-American families which have been scattered across the country come back home to renew their ties. These reunions often include hundreds of relatives who charter buses from California, Chicago and Detroit to return home. The "hometown clubs" found in some northern cities are another reflection of this general phenomenon.

### **Conclusion**

One aspect that all of the revisionist theories on the Afro-American national question have in common is that they all objectively unite with the policy of national oppression of the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie. The revisionists negate the responsibility of the Anglo-American communists to fight white chauvinism, they negate the duty of Anglo-American communists to organize actively among the white proletariat, and they encourage the Anglo-American communists to take a passive role in party building and leading a revolutionary movement for socialism in this country. Whether it is the "Three Worlds Theory," claiming that the oppressed peoples will lead, the *Line of March* claiming that whites are going against their material interests in fighting racism, or the CPUSA dropping altogether the slogan of self-determination – all these theories mean that in practice the Anglo-American communists do not have to go among the Anglo-American proletariat and confront, fight and defeat white supremacist ideology and bourgeois influence. This indicates a total lack of faith in the masses, a lack of faith that the Anglo-American working class is indeed capable of carrying out its historic mission to make revolution. This indicates a fear of revolution itself, and this failure is downright cowardice. Furthermore, tailing behind the rankest national reformists demonstrates a lack of confidence in the Afro-American masses as well.

As the U.S. imperialists move toward fascism and a policy of inciting pogroms and massacres of one nationality by another, the U.S. working class movement must make a break with these policies or the workers movement will, as Stalin said, "be drowned in blood."

In conclusion, we would like to point out that the struggle against revisionism on the question of Afro-American liberation must take place not only in the theoretical and ideological sphere but in the political and economic spheres. We believe that the comrades of the RPO/ML are indeed doing that. The Anglo-American comrades have energetically taken up the struggle against white chauvinism in the Anglo-American working class. They have directly confronted the Klan and liberal chauvinism. They have also carried out the day to day struggle in the trade unions and in the work places against all manifestations of white supremacy. Our comrades, Anglo- and Afro-Americans have been threatened, attacked, and arrested but never have they backed away from the struggle. And this struggle has produced results, more and more Anglo-Americans work and stand alongside their class brothers.

We have full confidence in the ability of the Anglo-American working class to defeat the influence of white chauvinism in its ranks and carry out its historic mission in the

international struggle to overthrow the imperialist powers. We have full confidence that proletarian internationalism can overcome bourgeois nationalism in all its forms and the united U.S. working class and oppressed nations can be victorious over U.S. imperialism.

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Afro-American youths stand guard, defending the people's movement against reactionary violence – Mississippi, Afro-American Nation, 1964.



# Has the Afro-American Nation 'Disappeared?'

## Revolutionary Political Organization/Marxist-Leninist

Among the so-called Marxists who deny the national rights of the Afro-American people, there is one camp that claims that the Afro-American Nation has never existed and another camp that admits it did exist at one time, but has since ceased to exist. The second group does not want to openly dispute the position of Lenin, Stalin and the Comintern, which clearly recognized the Afro-American people as a nation. But they point to the great migration of Afro-American people out of the South and claim that since the time of the Comintern the Afro-American Nation has "dispersed." Is it possible that the migration of Afro-American people out of the South to the industrial centers of the North and West has led to the disappearance of the Afro-American Nation? Certainly there have been great changes, but an examination of the 1980 population statistics shows that in the Black Belt territory of the South a region of Afro-American majority still exists and that this region is still the home of the greatest concentration of Afro-American people in the country. This is the territory of the Afro-American Nation, the homeland of the Afro-American people.

In his book, *The Negro Question in the United States*, James Allen presented the basic thesis of the Communist Party USA during the years that it recognized the right of the Afro-American Nation to self-determination. In this book Allen defined, in the most scientific terms yet seen, the approximate territory of the Afro-American Nation, the region traditionally known as the "Black Belt South." Allen grouped together 321 counties in 12 states as the Black Belt territory, basing this on both the concentration of Afro-American population and on the existence of the plantation economy. This was a continuous territory of Afro-American majority from Maryland to Texas. Beyond this region, he delineated a "Border Territory" which had a large Afro-American population and some characteristics of the plantation economy and was closely tied to the Black Belt region politically and economically. The extent of these territories is outlined on the map [at the bottom].

At that time, the Afro-American population of the Black Belt numbered approximately 4,790,000 and represented about 40% of the Afro-American population in the United States. An additional 20% of the Afro-American population lived in the Border Territory. The extent of the migration out of the South since this time is presented in Chart No. 1, which compares Allen's figures (based on the 1930 census) with figures gathered from the 1980 census.

**Chart 1 – Distribution of Afro-American Population 1930-1980\***

Region	1930		1980	
	Number	% of Afro-American Population in the	Number	% of Afro-American Population in the U S

		U.S.		
Black Belt	4,790,049	40.3%	5,033,567	19.0%
Border Territory	2,358,302	19.8%	4,551,016	17.2%
South (other than above**)	1,627,493	13.8%	3,383,392	12.8%
Non-South	3,115,299	26.1%	13,520,243	51.0%
Total	11,894,143	100.0%	26,488,218	100.00%

\* This data is based on James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, International Publishers, New York (1936) and on the 1980 *Census of Population and Housing, Advance Reports*, published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Allen's figures are based on the 1930 Census reports. The U.S. Census, by its own admission, greatly undercounts the population of Afro-Americans and other national minorities. It has been proven by successful challenges in the bourgeois courts that the 1980 Census, in particular, undercounted Afro-Americans. Therefore, the Afro-American population should be assumed to be larger, even much larger, than Census Bureau statistics indicate. Because undercounting has occurred particularly in the rural areas of the Black Belt South (where the census is largely taken by mail), the Afro-American population of this region should be considered larger, in absolute terms, and be a greater proportion of the overall population of the Black Belt, than the Census Bureau statistics indicate. In addition, the overall Afro-American population of the United States should be considered greater than indicated. Also, because a number of counties have been reorganized since 1930, it was impossible to get a completely accurate population count to compare with the 1930 figures without additional research. Therefore, the figures should be seen as approximate.

\*\*In this chart we refer to "the South" as those 12 states, portions of which lie in the Black Belt: Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. The Census Bureau also includes Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky and Oklahoma in its designation of "the South."

The figures on this chart show the results of the large-scale migration of Afro-Americans to the industrial centers of the North and West. While in 1930, only 26% of the Afro-American population lived outside the South, today just over half (51.04%) do. The Afro-American population in the Black Belt territory has declined from 40% of the total Afro-American population to 19% today. However, many of those who have left the rural areas of the Black Belt have not left the region altogether, but have moved to the large Southern cities in the Border Territory which have historically been closely tied to the Black Belt. Indeed, many of these cities, including Birmingham, Richmond, Atlanta and Baltimore have become majority Black in recent years. Today, over **9,584,000** Afro-Americans live in the Black Belt and Border Territory, making up over **36%** of the total Afro-American population. Over **5,000,000** Afro-Americans live in the Black Belt homeland itself. By comparison, 1,784,124 Afro-Americans live in New York City, the largest concentration outside the Black Belt; 1,197,000 live in Chicago; and 758,939 live in Detroit. Approximately one out of every five Afro-Americans lives in the Black Belt and two out of every five in the Black Belt and border regions.



**There have never been more Afro-Americans living in the Black Belt than there are today.** Chart No. 2 illustrates the **stability of Afro-Americans in the Black Belt** since the days of slavery.

<i>Chart 2</i>	
<b>Afro-American Population of the Black Belt 1860-1980</b>	
Census Year	Afro-American Population
1980	5,033,567
1930	4,790,049
1920	4,806,565
1910	4,842,766
1900	4,488,911
1890	3,866,792
1880	3,466,924
1870	2,560,263
1860	2,461,099
Data from Allen and the 1980 Census	

It is not surprising that the Afro-American population In the Black Belt has not grown considerably since the turn of the century. Despite the fact that the capitalist transformation of agriculture in the Black Belt region has been extremely slow, and feudal remnants (some sharecropping and labor service for rural semi-proletarians) exist to this day, this transformation has been and is taking place. Hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers and small landowners have been driven off the land. At the same time, because of the policy of U.S. imperialism, the Black Belt region lags way behind the rest of the U.S. in modern industry. It remains the poorest region of the country with the exception of the homelands of the Chicano and Native American peoples. Without industry, the region cannot possibly support a larger population. Hence the tremendous migration. This is not unusual in the least: imperialism draws immigrant workers from underdeveloped subject nations throughout the world. In the case of Puerto Rico, over one third of the population has been drawn to New York City, Chicago and the other major cities in the U.S., but this does not change the fact that Puerto Rico remains the

homeland of the Puerto Rican people! The same holds true for the Afro-American Nation. Even though the majority of the Afro-American people live outside the territory of their homeland, they still have strong family and social ties to the Black Belt region. And there remains in the Black Belt homeland a stable Afro-American population which is in fact growing, if only slightly. In the conditions of capital accumulation, economic crisis and stagnation that exist today, the outward migration from the South appears to have been reversed. The Census Bureau estimates that between 1975 and 1980, **195,000** more Afro-Americans returned to the South than left it.\*\*\* This reverse migration can be traced in part to the movement of capital from the North to the South in recent years, resulting in the return of the Afro-American workers to their homeland because of the lack of jobs in the industrial centers of the North.

\*\*\* *American Demographics*, October. 1982. p. 19

The question remains: is the Black Belt territory, as defined by Allen, still an area of Afro-American majority? There is no question but that the percentage of Afro-Americans in this territory in relation to Anglo-Americans has declined. But this decline can be easily exaggerated and misrepresented. Taking the 321 Black Belt counties identified by Allen, the Afro-American percentage of the population has declined from 60% in 1900 to just over 38% today. But this figure is misleading.

We know that the Census Bureau consistently undercounts Afro-Americans, but there are other considerations as well. **The actual territory of the Black Belt is not defined by county lines.** Many counties include a portion of the Black Belt and a portion outside the Black Belt. Pickens County in Alabama, for instance, is by Census Bureau statistics only 41.8% Afro-American. But this overall figure obscures the fact that the southern part of the county, which lies within the Black Belt, is overwhelmingly Afro-American (maybe 80%), while the northern part of the county, which is outside the Black Belt, is the home of the majority of the white population. The boundaries of the Black Belt territory, while they do not follow county lines, are nevertheless stable and the regions of Afro-American concentration are virtually identical to what they were during Reconstruction over a century ago.

**This territory remains a region of Black majority.** Even if we restrict ourselves to overall county statistics, as we were forced to do for this study because of time constraints, **the heart of the Black Belt region, consisting of approximately 150 counties in ten states, remains a region of Black majority.** The Afro-American population of these counties in the heart of the Black Belt alone numbers well over 2,000,000. But the true region of Black majority extends beyond these counties and includes large sections of all the surrounding counties. Therefore, we believe the figure of 5,000,000 (roughly the Afro-American population of the 321 counties identified by Allen as Black Belt counties) is a reasonable estimate of the Afro-American population of the region of Black majority.

The five million Afro-Americans that live in the Black Belt territory can by no means be considered a "small" population. Many sovereign nations have smaller populations, including Albania, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Ireland,

Finland, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Laos, Libya, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Somalia and Uruguay. The territory of the Black Belt is considerable, with ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and, likewise, is larger than the territory of many sovereign nations.

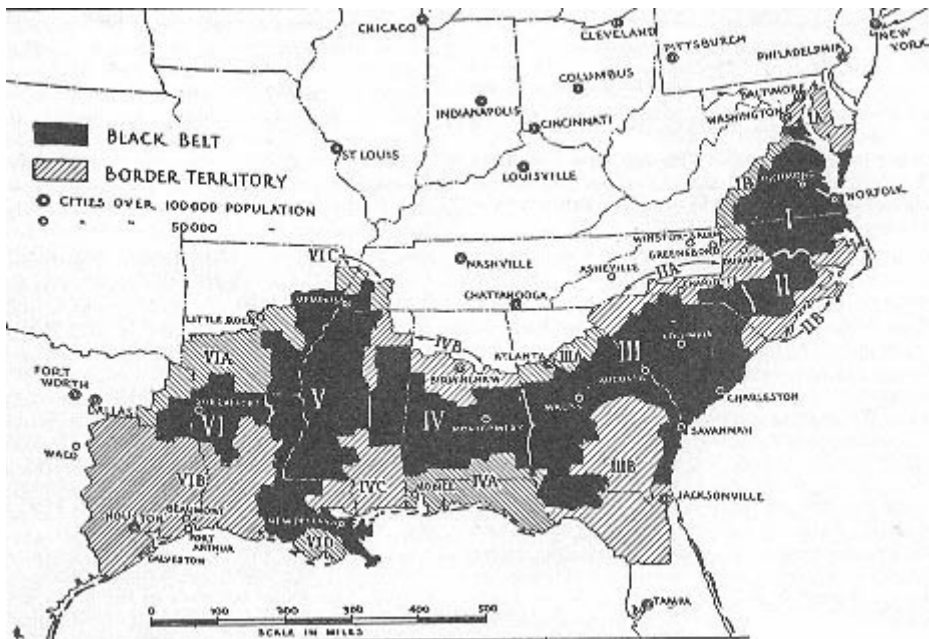
We do not propose in this article to try to lay out definite borders of the Afro-American nation. These will be determined in the future. Under socialism, the borders of an Afro-American Republic, guaranteeing an Afro-American majority, will be drawn up scientifically, based on national composition as well as economic and political factors and the desires of the local population.

The experience of the Soviet Union during the period of socialist construction is instructive on the question of establishing truly democratic national frontiers under socialism. The primary factor in drawing these boundaries was to respect the national rights of the formerly oppressed peoples, and there was no stipulation that nations had to have a tremendous population or make up an overwhelming majority of the population in a particular national territory in order to be guaranteed all national rights, including the right to secede. Take the following example: the Kirgizia people of Central Asia numbered only 661,000 when the Kirgizia Republic was formed in 1926 and they made up only 66% of the population of the Republic.

The approach taken by those who would deny the Afro-American people their national rights on the pretext the Afro-American nation has been "dispersed" is fundamentally erroneous, chauvinist and reactionary. Facts show that the Afro-American nation, which has suffered the most unbearable plunder and restriction of its political rights, continues to exist. It has all the main objective requisites necessary for the establishment of a separate national state if it so chooses.

Reproduced from James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*

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## **Statement by the Red Dawn Collective**

In order to make proletarian socialist revolution in the U.S., there must be unity among the multi-national proletariat. There must be revolutionary unity based on the strategic alliance between the proletariat and the national movements. This alliance can be built through the recognition by the multi-national proletariat of the existence of the Black Nation in the Black Belt South and its right to self-determination up to and including secession. To make this alliance a reality, the communist movement must purge all forms of revisionism and great nation and white chauvinism from its ranks.

Many revisionist forces simply refuse to recognize the existence of the Black Nation oppressed within the U.S. But some of the forces that have raised the issue of the Black Nation have put restrictions and qualifications on the question of self-determination up to and including secession. They get away with this because genuine revolutionaries have not yet made this question a mass issue. Hopefully, this historic meeting will be a first step in developing practical ways to bring this about.

The U.S. Communist Party raised the question of self-determination and secession at the insistence of the Comintern and Stalin. While they did good work around this for a time, they later abandoned it as they degenerated into opportunism and economism in their over-all work.

The October League raised the question of self-determination for the Black nation only to undermine it. At their Third National Congress they said that they "opposed secession at this time," and would certainly have opposed it after the U.S. proletarian socialist revolution as well. In essence, the O.L. set the conditions for the struggle of the Black masses and robbed them of their right to self-determination, the right to choose. They denied the possibility that the oppressed Black nation could win its liberation before the U.S. proletarian revolution for socialism. This possibility was very specifically recognized by the Comintern in its 1930 resolution, which pointed out that this was definitely preferable to the Black nation's remaining oppressed by imperialism. Regarding the possibility of liberation of the Black nation before socialist revolution in the entire U.S., we would like to point out that the most recent revolutionary upsurge, in the 60's and 70's, did not embrace the working class as a whole. It was the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed Black nation and the oppressed national minorities that was the leading force.

Communists must put the demand for self-determination up to and including secession in the forefront of the struggle for proletarian socialist revolution, and actively fight and organize the multi-national proletariat and oppressed masses around this question. To do otherwise is to restrict oneself to fighting for simple trade union unity of Blacks and whites and to downgrade and liquidate the political struggle for self-determination. To do this is economism, bowing to the spontaneity of the workers' movement.

The revisionists say that the mechanization of agriculture, industrialization, and migration of Blacks out of the Black Belt South has liquidated the Black national question. This is

reflected in the Revolutionary Union's revisionist position of a Black proletarian "nation of a new type," dispersed throughout the U.S. This position liquidates the Black nation and its rights as an oppressed nation, and even dissolves regional autonomy into reform struggles for community control. Despite the changes in the Black Belt, which need further study, a nation cannot exist without land. For an oppressed nation in which actual ownership of the land is in the hands of the oppressing nation it is the relationship of the masses to the land that entitles them to eventual control over it.

We recognize the responsibility of communists, and particularly those from the oppressor nation, to bring the question of self-determination to the white workers. We see this in keeping with the proletarian spirit of internationalism.

"There have never been more Afro-Americans living in the Black Belt than there are today. It remains the poorest region of the country with the exception of the homelands of the Chicano and Native American peoples."



# **Resolutions Adopted at the School on the Afro-American National Question**

## **On Joint Work to Advance the Struggle for the Right to Political Secession of the Afro-American Nation**

The raging chauvinism of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie against the Afro-American Nation necessitates, at this time, that real democrats and Marxist-Leninists intensify their agitation, propaganda and organizational work to advance the revolutionary struggle of the Afro-American Nation, especially for its right to self-determination and to secession. Specifically, the following organizations agree to:

- (1) Publish the documents of this school for circulation throughout the country.
- (2) Publish shorter agitation and propaganda materials on the same subjects.
- (3) Conduct forums in our respective cities to champion the struggle for self-determination (especially activities during "Black History Month" in February) and to show the slide show.
- (4) Organize a special tour of the major areas of the North during February for showing the slide show.
- (5) Conduct, where possible, joint work around Emancipation Proclamation celebration days in the Black Belt South.
- (6) Develop a mass poster on the subject of the right to political secession *of* the Afro-American Nation to be distributed widely throughout the Black Belt and the South as a whole.

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## **Condemning White Chauvinism**

### **In Support of the Right of Self-Determination for the Afro-American Nation Including the Right to Secession**

Whereas, we condemn the oppression of Afro-American people in the U.S. and the subjugation of the Afro-American Nation in the Black Belt South; and

Whereas, we know that great nation chauvinism is the greatest danger to building unity between the multinational proletariat; and

Whereas, white communists and revolutionaries must champion the struggle against great nation chauvinism and white supremacy;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Marxist-Leninist organizations and anti-imperialist revolutionaries at this Afro-American National Question School:

(1) Will go out and work among the workers to defeat great nation chauvinism and fight white supremacy, especially among the white working class. White cadres will be especially dispatched to carry out this work; and

(2) Will put forward a Marxist-Leninist line on the question of self-determination, including the right to political secession, among all sections of the working class, especially among white workers; and

(3) Will recruit workers into multinational communist organizations in order to carry out our central task of party building and carry on the revolution in this country. For it is only the working class under the leadership of a genuine communist party which can defeat great nation chauvinism, the main danger, and all forms of nationalism.

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### **In Support of Gary Tyler**

Whereas: Gary Tyler, a young Afro-American man from Destrehan, Louisiana, is a political prisoner of U.S. imperialism, incarcerated for over seven years in the infamous Angola Prison. Brother Tyler is sentenced to prison for life on framed-up murder charges resulting from a Klan-inspired attack on a school bus carrying Afro-American children. Brother Tyler has been singled out in this frame-up because he was outspoken against national oppression at his high school. Brother Tyler was convicted in a kangaroo court by an all-white jury and had no genuine representation for his defense. All witnesses against Brother Tyler have recanted their stories and admitted that they were forced by the bourgeoisie to lie. The railroad of Brother Tyler is typical of U.S. imperialist justice throughout the Afro-American Nation; and

Whereas: Gary Tyler has served the majority of his sentence in solitary confinement because he has refused to pick cotton at the prison for 3¢ an hour, stating that his ancestors fought against this slavery. Brother Tyler was 16 when he went into prison and he has reached manhood behind bars, robbed of the finest years of his life. Brother Tyler has remained an inspiration to his fellow prisoners because of his firm stand against U.S. imperialism and his support for self-determination of the Afro-American Nation including the right to political secession;

Therefore: Be it resolved that the Marxist-Leninist organizations and anti-imperialist activists attending the Afro-American National Question School:

(1) Send our warmest fraternal greetings to Gary Tyler; and



(2) Pledge to conduct agitation in our cities and work places about the struggle to free Gary Tyler and connect this agitation to the right of the Afro-American Nation to self-determination, including the right to secession.

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## **In Support of the Struggle for Self-Determination for the Palestinian Nation**

Whereas, the Palestinian people have been robbed of their homeland and brutally persecuted by the U.S.-backed Israeli Zionists; and

Whereas, the Palestinian people have been the subject of the most fascist relocation plans into concentration camps called "refugee camps" by the Israeli Zionists; and

Whereas; the U.S.-backed Israeli Zionists have carried out a rabid policy of expansionism into Lebanon, and committed fascist genocidal attacks against the Palestinian and Lebanese people; and

Whereas, the U.S., Israeli Zionist, and Lebanese governments have acted in concert to oppress and massacre the Palestinian people, with the fascist Zionist and right-wing Christian Phalangist armies committing the most cowardly slaughter of Palestinian men, women, and children – a massacre carried out only after the heroic fighters of the Palestine Liberation Organization evacuated the camps; and

Whereas, the U.S. imperialist military has been dispatched to Lebanon to protect the oilmen's interests under the guise of "protecting the Palestinian people" but the real motive is to continue the Zionist murder and persecution of Palestinians and progressive Lebanese;

Therefore, be it resolved that Marxist-Leninist organizations and anti-imperialist activists attending the Afro-American National Question School:

(1) Support the brave and just cause of the Palestinian nation for self-determination, including the right to set up an independent Palestinian state; and

(2) Condemn U.S. imperialism and Israeli Zionism as arch enemies of the Arab and other oppressed peoples and the working people of the world; and

(3) Support the valiant fight of the Lebanese leftists to oust the occupying Israeli Zionists from their country; and

(4) Oppose U.S. intervention and aid to the fascist Phalangist government in Lebanon and the government of Israel, and all phony war-mongering schemes such as the Reagan "peace" plan; and

- (5) Oppose the fascist government in Lebanon as a puppet of U.S. imperialism and Zionism; and
- (6) We proudly and energetically take up our duty to build solidarity between the workers of the U.S. and the people of Palestine, and the progressive people in Lebanon and Israel who are fighting against U.S./Zionist aggression; and
- (7) Support the staunch and militant resistance of the Palestinian people and Lebanese leftists who are laying down their lives in the struggle for self-determination; and
- (8) Call to our brother and sister workers of Israel to break with the fascist Zionist regime and fight side by side with the Palestinian people.